UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF DOGRIB TEACHERS IN THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

BY

MARILYN BRIGHT

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to:

- *The eight Dogrib teachers who shared their stories with me.*

- *The other teachers and the administrators in the Dogrib Division and the government officials who have worked with caring and commitment to strengthen the public education system in the Northwest Territories.*

- *My eleven grandchildren and my one great-grandchild who are my joy and my hope for the future.*

Abstract

The study is a narrative inquiry which records the learning and teaching experiences of eight Dogrib Aboriginal teachers in the Canadian Northwest Territories, in the midst of the rapid changes occurring within their communities. The Dogrib people belong to the Canadian Athapaskan or Dene group of First Nations people. Within their life span, the way of life in their communities has changed from a predominantly hunting and gathering lifestyle to a wage-based, global, technological lifestyle. The study describes the results of such rapid change on the cultural traditions and the social environment of the people in the communities and the impacts of the change on the public education system. It articulates the cultural differences between the Dogrib culture and the mainstream Euro-Canadian culture which have implications for the educational system in the Dogrib school division. It explores the needs, as expressed by the Dogrib teachers who were interviewed, for continuing in-service support and professional development in their roles as teachers.

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When I returned to university, he took care of our home and watered my plants for me in my long absences. He cooked my meals during the time when I was glued to the computer in my office. He supported and encouraged me when I was too exhausted to smile. I am deeply grateful.

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I. Introduction: Origins of the Study

Teaching in an Unfamiliar Culture

As Canadian teachers (of English and Scottish heritage) my husband and I had been teaching in central and north-central Alberta for a number of years. In 1989 we fulfilled a lifelong dream of teaching together in an Aboriginal community in the Northwest Territories. The concerns expressed in this study originated at that time when my husband and I travelled from our home in north-central Alberta to a small, isolated, Dogrib community in the Northwest Territories to teach in the community's public school. The move was prompted by our long family history of being interested in Canadian Aboriginal cultures, stemming in part from our experience of raising our adopted Cree daughter.

Aware of some of the general differences between Aboriginal and mainstream Canadian cultures, we thought that our background of experience had to some degree prepared us for our new teaching assignment. But we were not familiar with the northern Dene (or Athapaskan) cultures. Although we attempted to prepare ourselves for the experience, we were able to gather only surface bits of isolated information about the Dogrib people. We knew little about the history and cultural heritage of the children we were to teach or about their current social situation; nothing of their language or of the particular cultural traditions and values within which they were growing up.

As experienced teachers we carried with us the conscious and unconscious understanding of teaching and learning that we had developed within our teaching careers. As human beings we carried with us the ways of relating to other people that we had consciously and unconsciously learned within the mainstream Canadian culture with its Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman-European origins. As middle class professionals and members of the dominant, mainstream, Canadian culture (who had always fit relatively easily and comfortably into the new environments we had explored) we carried with us an unconscious expectation that our presence in the community would be welcomed, trusted

and valued and that our status as teachers would earn us an automatic level of acceptance and respect.

It is not an exaggeration, therefore, to describe the initial experience of being a "stranger in a strange land" as one of "shock". Almost everything we encountered in that small northern community was unfamiliar. The terrain (part of the Great Northern Shield) was vastly different than that of our home. The community was isolated. The transport system was not by the roads to which we were accustomed but by air and water, resulting in changes to our patterns of travel and affecting the type of food to which we had access. We were the only two "white southerners" in a community of a little more than a hundred people and we were immersed in an unfamiliar culture, isolated from our own cultural heritage. In a sense, we had left our dominant status behind and had become the minority (although members of a majority culture never quite lose their dominant status). At the same time we were isolated from our familiar contacts with family members and friends by distance and the inadequacy of the communication system: mail, bush-radio and radio-phone.

Soon after arriving in our new community we travelled with the other community members, by boat, to a traditional gathering place where an important Dogrib Nation assembly was being held. There the sense of "strangeness" increased dramatically, and the absence of trust became clearly visible, as we became a minority of two in a much larger gathering of people.

Our group had arrived at the gathering place early and a canvas tent had been pitched for us. Other groups began to arrive by airplane hourly, and the area began to fill with other tents. Our tent was soon conspicuous by the wide space left between it and the tents of the Dogrib people. People continued to arrive for the next few days until the camp became somewhat crowded, but a space around our tent remained unoccupied. One afternoon we left our camping spot and went for a walk. When we returned we were happy to see that in our absence a family had pitched their tent next to ours. We greeted

the family and then, tired from our walk, we went inside our tent to rest for a while. When we awoke we were dismayed to discover that our neighbours had moved their tent to a new location. Eventually, to our relief, a Dogrib family from the city of Yellowknife, who were more accustomed to being around white southerners, pitched their tent beside ours and befriended us.

We found that we could not predict what would happen within social interactions in the same way we would have been able to in our home community. It was the unfamiliarity and unpredictability of our surroundings that created the stress and tension within us that we label as "culture shock". During the time of the assembly we were isolated by our inability to speak the Dogrib language. One day, feeling lonely, we went to visit at the tent of the chief of our own community where we knew we would be able to speak to people in English. When we arrived a number of people were there, visiting and eating caribou and bannock together. We were invited in but soon after, one by one, people began leaving. Before long we were alone in the tent with the chief's elderly mother, who was lying on a mattress near the tent opening. When she too arose and left the tent we looked at each other quizzically and returned to our own camping spot. We gave up trying to visit.

Eventually we decided that it was time for us to return to the community and prepare for the opening of school. We had travelled to the gathering place in our own small boat and so were free to return to the community before the other community members were ready to leave the assembly. The day we planned to leave a stronger than usual wind arose. As my husband began to take down our tent I began to carry some of our belongings down to our small boat on the shore of the lake. Each time I went to the boat one of the men of our community approached me and asked if we were planning to leave. When I answered, "Yes!" and explained that my husband felt it was necessary to leave, the men commented on how windy it was. On my final trip to the boat the chief himself approached me and the same conversation was repeated. When I did not indicate

any intention of changing our plans to leave, the chief finally stated directly that if we intended to travel on the lake in that wind we should keep as close as possible to the far shore. Unwisely, we did travel on the lake that day, and wished that we had heeded the guidance that was being offered to us. We arrived in the community many hours later, cold, tired and very relieved to be safe on dry land again. But we often talked about the indirect way the advice had been given to my husband, through me, in such a gentle, non-directive manner. Had we been in a similar situation in a southern mainstream cultural setting the men would most likely have approached my husband directly with some strongly worded comment such as, "You're a damn fool to go out on that lake today!"

In *Dreams and Visions in Other Lifeworlds*, Jean-Guy Goulet (1994) writes of the indirect way of communicating among the Dene people.

> From the onset of fieldwork among the Dene Tha I knew that they communicated in ways which appear to Euro-Canadians as indirect and restrained. These ways had first come to my attention in the late 1970s in a story told by Rene Fumoleau who arrived in 1953 as a missionary in Fort Good Hope, and who has since assimilated Dene values to a rare degree for a non-Dene (Fumoleau 1981). . . . In the course of [a] conference, Fumoleau expressed to a Dene friend his wish for an opportunity to spend time in the bush. Proceeding with typical Dene sensitivity not to impose oneself on others, Fumoleau did not expect an immediate response to his statement of interest. He was conducting himself as a Dene would have conducted himself. Hence at the end of the conference he did not know what would come out of the communication of his desire to spend time in the bush. Fumoleau and his friend were soon hundreds of kilometres apart, he in Yellowknife, north of the Great Slave Lake, and his friend in Fort Good Hope, on the Mackenzie River.
>
> A few weeks after the conference, a Fort Good Hope resident stopped by Fumoleau's house to visit and have tea. In the course of their conversation, the visitor mentioned that Fumoleau's friend was to spend a few weeks in the bush in the fall. No more was said on the topic, but Fumoleau understood that he was being told that the opportunity was there for him to soon join his friend. A few more weeks went by and another visitor from Fort Good Hope stopped by Fumoleau's house, one who would mention in passing the exact date on which Fumoleau's friend had chartered a small plane to be flown with his family to their trapline in the bush. Here was the invitation to go along. Fumoleau simply packed what he needed to spend a few weeks in the bush, and boarded a plane that flew him to Fort Good Hope. There, his friends simply took him aboard their chartered plane and left for the bush. . . . Among the Dene, one offers information in an apparently restrained manner; others respond in an apparently equally restrained manner. The appearance of restraint exists, however, only in the eyes of non-Dene. From the perspective of the Dene Tha, their style of communication is clear and unambiguous. Once the differences in the pattern of interaction and the built-in assumptions are identified, these examples of communication become perfectly understandable (p.27).

Back in the community we gradually became aware, through trial and error, of some of the cultural values and understandings of the people. Eventually we learned to know the community members as individual people and as friends. One day, soon after arriving in the community, while walking to school I met an elderly gentleman, the chief's father, along the way. Wanting to be friendly, and following the way of my own cultural heritage, I looked directly and openly at him and smiled broadly, expecting an answering smile. He shook his head angrily and scowled sharply at me. Feeling chastised, like a small child, I quickly remembered what I had previously been told: that it is impolite for a woman to look directly into the eyes of a Dogrib man. I dropped my eyes at once. The rules for eye contact are different in the Dogrib culture. Later I learned to know the chief's father as a kind, gentle person with a keen sense of humour and a fun-loving nature.

It was, however, within our attempts to teach the children that we experienced our greatest source of stress and tension. When school opened a wave of confusion flooded over us. We carried to the school with us our unconscious assumptions about what opening day would be like. We expected to find the children similar in their first-day-of-school behaviour to the central Albertan children we had taught previously. We thought they would be a little shy, quiet, reserved and easy-to-manage. The children, however, had other ideas. They entered the school full of excitement, energy, and the determination to explore, sample, try out and use everything that was available. They had spent the summer in almost total freedom from routine and structure, and were not at all interested in being regimented into a typical Albertan school pattern. They were spontaneous in action and uncontrollable, and it seemed to us like utter chaos.

As professional educators with many years of experience we held an unconscious expectation that our role as teachers would carry with it the same authority that it usually does in most southern Canadian communities (at least on the first day of school). We believed that the children would respond to us as authority figures but that assumption

was quickly seen to be incorrect. They saw no reason whatsoever to do things simply because we told them to. We eventually came to understand that we were in a culture that does not automatically assign respect and authority to individuals in certain positions. They are granted only to individuals who have earned them through their actions over time, who have demonstrated trustworthiness and competence. In such a cultural milieu respect and authority would not automatically be granted to total strangers (or new teachers). Each new set of teachers had to establish their own level of credibility. But without that comfortable prop of role-generated, authority it was difficult to carry out the teaching process. It was like walking through uncharted territory without compass, trail or star to guide us. Repeatedly we tried, stumbled, picked ourselves up and tried again. It was only after we had been in the community for three years that we began to find a measure of success in our teaching as a result of the growing trust and respect of the students and the community as a whole.

That first year, however, our previous years of teaching experience did not seem to serve us well. We frequently felt ourselves to be at odds with the children, trying to force them to learn the concepts that we were required by the Department of Education to try to teach them. We encountered strong resistances in the children to our attempts at teaching; resistances which we did not understand and could not explain. We could not predict how they would react to the lessons we tried to present to them. We could not predict how they would respond to the methods we were attempting to use in our teaching, or explain why the lessons so often failed to accomplish what we hoped they would. It was difficult to understand or interpret the children's behaviours.

History of Education in the Northwest Territories

Many other southern teachers in the Northwest Territories talk of experiences similar to ours which they experienced in their early years of teaching in the north. Historically the Department of Education of the Northwest Territories has hired

predominantly white teachers from southern Canada to teach the Dene children, but there are difficult problems associated with importing teachers from the southern provinces to teach in northern Aboriginal schools. The negative features associated with such cross-cultural education in the north are widely recognized: the transience of the southern teachers leading to discontinuity in the educational process; their inability to speak the Aboriginal language and their lack of knowledge of the Dene cultural heritage and attendant problems of ethnocentrism. (G.N.W.T., 1982, p. 114). Outlining the history of education in the Northwest Territories in a teacher education document (1990) Jim Martin, Director of the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education, described the situation.

> Northern communities have had to rely on largely transient, southern teachers to educate their children. The cultural distance between the largely white, urban teachers and the rural, native children has been immense, and unfortunately, has remained largely unabridged. Few things have been more alien in the lives of northern children than schooling as it has often been delivered. Southern trained teachers have frequently had a southern urban focus that has been irrelevant to the lives of northern students. Unaware of the intricate and often fragile elements that sustain native communities, their dominant positions within the schools has ensured that their beliefs and methods prevailed. However the children (and frequently the parents through the children) resisted the system through lateness, inattention, poor attendance and the innumerable, "inexplicable" barriers to learning (white ways) which paradoxically have been small, negative successes for their ways (p.7).

"Lateness, inattention, poor attendance and the innumerable, 'inexplicable' barriers to learning (white ways)" were among the behaviours we met in our attempts to teach the children which we were at a loss to understand or interpret. In addition, we experienced at first hand the distance between Dogrib and southern culture, finding it difficult to communicate with the parents about their children's progress in school. Our different cultural heritages and languages got in the way of clear communication.

In response to these widely recognized problems in northern education the Government of the Northwest Territories has made a commitment to provide teacher education programs which are appropriate for Aboriginal people in order to rapidly increase the number of Dene teachers teaching within Dene schools. As a result of that government commitment to Aboriginal teacher education a number of the teachers in the

Dogrib Divisional Board of Education are now certified Dogrib teachers who are teaching within the schools in their home communities. They have graduated from programs sponsored by southern universities and work side by side with the teachers from southern Canada. This is a process of change which should result in observable differences in the schools within the Dogrib School Division. But to this date there is little research which attempts to document and describe or articulate the changes which are occurring.

Focus of the Study

The history of education in the Northwest Territories and the personal events noted above are some of the experiences out of which the underlying concern of this study has arisen, and from which the research questions have been derived. It is a personal concern which has its origins in the experience of teaching in an unfamiliar Dene culture and the shock of being unable to understand or adequately interpret the conditions being experienced; the shock of not knowing intuitively the appropriate ways of behaving within that culture. But it is a concern which also originates in the awareness that such experiences are not limited to myself personally but are prevalent throughout the cross-cultural educational situation in the Canadian north.

Objectives of the Study

Pinning Down the Question

> If only one knew the meaning of one's question! If one could only ask it properly or formulate it more precisely! Is it really a question? Or is it a deep concern that finds no words that do it justice? (Kaufmann, 1970, p.32, cited in Olson, 1993, p.9)

Just such a deep, abiding, inarticulate concern lies beneath the surface of this study. It gives rise to countless pressing questions which clamour for attention, no one question seeming more relevant than another. It is a moral concern which seeks to understand some of the differences between the Dogrib cultural heritage and the mainstream, southern Canadian cultural heritage, in the hope of bridging the

communication gap between them. It is a concern that centres around the realm of teaching and yet extends beyond the world of teaching to touch upon all forms of inter-cultural contacts between human beings. It is a concern which has its roots in other deep, broad, difficult to articulate and pressing concerns: about the choices being made in our global society which seem both environmentally and humanly destructive; about the unequal distribution of the world's material wealth and the political power structures that support that inequality; about the forms of knowledge or understanding which are helpful in making wise choices.

It is a concern which expresses itself finally as a broad, general concern about the meaning, purpose and process of public education within the Dogrib School Division. Within the broader question countless other important questions arise, such as the question of how discipline should be conducted within Dogrib schools. But it is the broad, general concern which this study primarily addresses, rather than any specific question. The broadness of the concern is in keeping with the narrative nature of the inquiry which is essentially an open-ended form of inquiry that does not lend itself to tightly structured questions.

The Nature, Purpose and Significance of the Study

The study seeks to discover whether the meaning, purpose and process of education for the Dogrib people (and perhaps other Dene groups) in the small northern Canadian settlements should be the same as it is for southern mainstream cultures, or fundamentally different. It is, however, a very broad question which cannot be answered definitively in one small study. The study, therefore, is essentially an *exploratory* one covering broad and general aspects of the Dogrib teachers' experiences of teaching and learning in their home communities.

Within this study I assume that it is the Dogrib teachers themselves who are the experts on Dogrib culture (having been immersed in their own culture from birth) and who

are, therefore, the most capable of understanding and revealing the answers to the research question. I also assume that it is within the narrative account of their experiences of teaching and learning that clues to the meaning and purpose of education for the Dogrib people can be found and articulated. It is, therefore, a narrative study which involves the gathering of autobiographical information about the teaching and learning experiences of the Dogrib teachers within the context of their traditional but rapidly changing culture. The teachers' stories will provide a source of information about the Dogrib culture and about the ways the Dogrib culture is being reflected in the teachers' classrooms.

The study attempts to focus particularly on those experiences of the teachers which might have relevance for the present and future public education systems within the Dogrib communities and to articulate, in a tentative and exploratory way, some of the identifying features of the Dogrib Dene culture which are significant for educational decision making and planning.

The study should serve as a source of clues about the gradual changes which might be observed in the Dogrib schools as more Dogrib teachers become certified to teach within them. In this way the study can point the way to further, more extensive research. It is also hoped that the stories will provide a source of information and motivation for further discussion among all teachers in the division regarding appropriate forms of education for Dogrib students, thus serving as a communication bridge between the teachers of the two different cultural heritages. In addition, it should serve as an aid to educational administrators in providing continuing in-service and professional development for the Dogrib teacher education graduates and for their southern partners in teaching.

A secondary, but important, value of the study could be its usefulness in orienting new non-Dene teachers from southern Canada to the culture of the communities within which they will be teaching. The stories have the capacity to create empathetic

understanding and, therefore, to serve as a "bridge of understanding" between two very different cultures. In this light they also have the potential to be helpful to those interested in areas other than education, such as Northern health issues, social and economic development, legal system issues, and preparation for self-government. Each of these areas overlap and are interconnected and interrelated with one another, and the Dene teachers have a vital role to play within the interrelationships.

Conducting the Study

Prior Arrangements

Prior to conducting the study it was necessary to apply for a research license from the Aurora Research Institute which issues licenses on behalf of the Government of the Northwest Territories. In order to receive a license to do research in the Northwest Territories all community councils and agencies involved must be consulted and give their approval to the study. Only then can individual people be invited to participate in the study. Explanatory letters requesting permission to conduct the study were sent to the Councils and Band Organizations in the communities involved. In addition, explanatory letters (preceded by phone calls) requesting permission to conduct the study were sent to the principals of the schools involved. Written permission was requested from the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education through the Director of the Divisional Board.

A research grant was received from the Northern Scientific Training Program which is administered through the Canadian Circumpolar Institute. The major portion of the grant was used for air travel to Yellowknife from Edmonton on two separate occasions. Two trips were made to the Northwest Territories , one trip in February, 1997 and another in June, 1997. In February, three weeks were spent in Rae Edzo where interviews were conducted with seven of the eight Dogrib teachers who participated in the study. After that time it was necessary to travel by air to a smaller, more isolated Dogrib settlement in order to interview the one other Dogrib teacher who was able to participate

in the study. One week was spent in the smaller settlement. In June a second trip was made to the Northwest Territories in order to spend an additional week in the larger settlement of Rae Edzo to add to the information which had been gathered in February and to confirm the transcriptions of the previously collected material.

Participants in the Study

A total of eight Dogrib teachers were interviewed for the study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect their anonymity outside of their own communities. However, within the small communities themselves it is impossible to guarantee complete anonymity since the circumstances of the teachers' lives are familiar to most community members.

All of the teachers were women who had previously served within the Dogrib School Division as classroom assistants, special needs assistants or Dogrib language assistants. Both Arctic College in Ft. Smith and the Dogrib Divisional Board of Education had provided training for the teaching assistants in a variety of forms while they were working as para-professionals. They were sent to various conferences and to courses at Arctic College and other universities. Through this wide exposure and their classroom experience they had learned a great deal about being in the classroom and about teaching before entering their various teacher education programs. These experiences gave them the encouragement and the confidence necessary to go on to become fully certified teachers themselves.

Some of the teachers were recent graduates of teacher education programs but others had been certified teachers for several years. They had been teaching in a variety of positions in their home communities since becoming certified as teachers. Louisa, Mary Rose, Nora, Rita and Rosalie had graduated from the first community based teacher education program in Rae Edzo in 1992. Anna, Lena and Mary Ann had just graduated and were in their first year of teaching after graduating. The teachers are a close-knit group who have known each other from childhood. There is close communication

between them and they serve as a support group for one another, calling upon each other for information, advice and encouragement.

Conducting the Interviews

There was a great variation in the amount of time spent interviewing each teacher since some teachers were able to commit more time to the study than others. Interviews had to be conducted over a relatively short time frame due to the necessity for the researcher to travel from Alberta to the Northwest Territories to conduct the interviews. The difficulty of communicating over the long distance between the interview site and the researcher's home made it difficult to set up an advanced schedule of interviews. The busyness of the teachers and their tight schedules made it difficult for some of them to commit the necessary time to being interviewed.

I had taught within the Dogrib Division for five years prior to returning to Alberta to continue my professional education. The first three of those years had been served as a multi-grade, classroom teacher in one of the smaller Dogrib communities and the fourth year was served as a multi-grade, classroom teacher in another of the smaller communities. My fifth year in the Division was spent as an instructor in the Community Based Teacher Education Program in the community of Wha Ti. In this way I became acquainted with many of the Dogrib teachers through my teaching assignments and also through attendance at conferences and workshops in the larger centre of Rae Edzo. It seemed to me that when there was a pre-established relationship with the teachers involved in this study the interviews seemed to flow more easily than they did with the teachers I had not previously known. Teachers who did not know me seemed shyer and more nervous and uncertain as to what to expect from the interview.

I felt that narrative inquiry was an unfamiliar form of research to most of them and that this unfamiliarity created a degree of uncertainty and hesitation in some of those who had agreed to participate. Mary Rose pointed out that, traditionally, stories arose

spontaneously in a social setting in the midst of natural conversation. The interview process did not seem natural. In addition, Rosalie drew attention to the difficulty of communicating in English, explaining that the study would have been much more accurate and informational if she had been able to speak in Dogrib, her first language.

Audio tape recordings were made for all of the interviews except for those with one teacher who requested not to be taped. Interviews with that teacher were summarized in writing during the interview. The audio tapes were later transcribed by the researcher, which was a lengthy process. Initially the transcripts were treated as *quotations* which needed to be rendered as accurately as possible. However, the elements of normal, informal oral speech (such as pauses and repetitions while the speakers gathered their thoughts, changes of direction in the line of thinking, local dialect, and so on) made the reading of the transcribed material cumbersome. In the process of validating the written account some of the teachers expressed a wish for the written account to flow more smoothly. For the final draft the transcriptions were treated as *translations*, so that the meaning and intent of the teachers' words could be rendered as faithfully as possible in a way that the reader could more easily follow. The translations were not made in perfect standard English but, rather, attempted to maintain a balance between ease of reading and a partial reflection of the spoken dialect and characteristic speech patterns of the Dogrib teachers.

After the transcription of the stories of the individual teachers, they were examined for common themes. Various parts of each teacher's transcript were then organized around those themes, creating an interwoven, integrated account, or story, of their experiences as Dogrib women during this time of rapid change and development within their communities.

The study assumes that the Dogrib teachers, themselves, are the experts on appropriate ways of teaching and learning within their own culture. In addition, it is the stories themselves which have the greatest power to create empathy and understanding of

the culture for people who do not share that cultural heritage. For this reason, the results of the study are presented, as much as possible, in the teachers' own words. The story belongs to them.

Limits of the Study

The study is small in scope, limited by the available finances, the long distance from the researcher's home in Alberta to the northern communities, the busyness of the teachers' interviewed, and the difficulties of cross-cultural communication. It is limited also in that only some of the Dogrib teachers now working in the community schools were able, or willing, to participate in the study. In addition, it is limited to the experiences of Dogrib teachers and cannot be generalized for other Dene people without further research. Nevertheless, it reveals some of the similarities and differences between Dogrib culture and Euro-Canadian culture and provides a base for additional research. In the midst of the rapid cultural changes occurring in the Dene communities of the Northwest Territories it seems important to preserve some of the historical data of how those cultural changes are affecting the people who are inextricably involved in it. This study attempts to do that.

II. Research Method: The Transforming Power of Narrative

Narrative in Research

The method of research used in the study is one of narrative inquiry. Where the underlying concern of the study is such a broad intercultural one, it seemed appropriate to use narrative inquiry to understand the experiences of the Dogrib teachers who are part of a traditionally oral (or story telling) culture. Story telling is a way of communicating in which the Dogrib teachers are both comfortable and competent. It is, as well, an aspect of their culture on which they place a high value. But narrative inquiry is an affront to many of the requirements, traditions and deeply-held values of academic, scientific research. Narrative incorporates an imaginative element into the inquiry, and as Gerald Vizenor (1994) has written, "Imagination is dangerous in the social sciences. It can bring a serious dissertation and promotion with tenure to a grim terminal conclusion" (p.71). The "clash" between the opposing forms of research is undeniable.

The Growth of Western Thought

The development of human thought in the western world is described by Robert Marks in *The Growth of Mathematics from Counting to Calculus* (1964).

> Human thought appears, in retrospect, to have moved successively from the concrete to the abstract, from specific cases to general principles. When the general principles have been deduced, philosophically-minded men usually detach themselves from the specific instances. Abstract principles are used to generate other abstract principles a stage higher in generality or sophistication. In the higher ranges of abstraction, the subject matter of thought is no longer objects of sight and touch, but the "laws of thought." Raw experience is superseded by intellectual experience whose nature is logical or psychological. The evolution of mathematics is a case in point (p.1).

Marks explains that mathematics was "initially an interpretation of experience", a practical activity which gradually developed generalized and systematized operations for counting and measuring, thereby developing techniques which became the foundations of western arithmetic and geometry. From that point on, number relations, linear forms and

logical systems evolved which separated themselves from their practical consequences and developed "mystiques of their own".

> Pythagoras, for example, found in number relations a mystical clue to the eternal forms of nature; and this discovery generated the idealized concept of forms in the philosophy of Plato. What is "real," it was asserted, are the relations in nature that are everywhere and always the same. All the angles of a plane triangle, for example, will every time add up to 180. This is a fact independent of time and place, as "true" now as in 500 B.C.; and presumably as true in 5000 A.D. (p.1).

The Oral Roots of Narrative

In *Coyote's Story About Orality and Literacy* (1990) Jo-Ann Archibald, an Aboriginal educator at the University of British Columbia, describes the conflict between narrative and rational approaches to knowledge as a clash between *oral* and *literate* forms of communication; in effect *"a clash between two worlds"*.

> Havelock (1963) in "Preface to Plato" likened Plato to a revolutionary who challenged the established oral Greek tradition and successfully replaced it with a rational, analytic, reflective, and abstract form of discourse. Plato viewed poets and poetry as the enemy of morality because they appealed to the senses and emotions; thereby making men vulnerable to acting unjustly: instead of being guided to search for the Good through the use of reason and the forms of knowledge. "Dramatic poetry has a most formidable power of corrupting even men of high character, with few exceptions" (Republic, x.604). Plato thought that the central problem to education was the significant influence of the poets, like Homer, whose poems negated the intellect and were "at the third remove from reality, nothing more than semblances, easy to produce with no knowledge of the truth" (Republic, x.599). . . .
>
> Plato wanted to banish epic poetry, the moral and intellectual enemy, from his utopian education and commonwealth: "let us tell her further that there is a long-standing quarrel between poetry and philosophy" (Republic, x.606). . . . If epic poetry was to be eliminated from the commonwealth then something would have to fill the educational void: "forms of thinking that full literacy makes possible" (Egan, 1988, p.59).
>
> Thus, Plato's Theory of Forms was introduced which demanded abstract, rational, and analytic language and thinking. Havelock believed that "Platonism at bottom is an appeal to substitute a conceptual discourse for an imagistic one . . . (1963, p.261)." Math and Science were considered the foundation for the dialectic, which prepared one to reach the highest level of thinking: episteme (The Republic, Ch. XXIV). Plato's "Republic" then, completed his revolutionary action of transforming Greek consciousness from an imaginative oral tradition to a rational literate one (p.69, 70).

Imagist ways of thinking relate to the word *imagery* which is defined, in part, as "vivid figures of speech conveying mental pictures" (Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary, 1984). Plato's preference for *form* or *ideas* over *imagination* involves a radical change to an analytical dissection of the world and of thought itself; a drastic paring down of the image to reveal its essential form. Maxine Greene (1994) alludes to the high value, or status, placed on logical, analytic forms of thought in the Western world. She refers to Plato's *Allegory of The Cave* in describing the nature of the analytical thinker as one who is believed to have emerged into the light of *truth* out of the shadows of *illusion.*

> [The analytical thinker] had to move beyond opinion, impulse, sensory experience, and desire. The prototype of such a seeker or seer was for a long time identified with the prisoner liberated from the cave in *The Republic*. Having believed throughout his life that the shadows of things cast on the wall before him and his fellow prisoners were the truth of those things, he can only be dazzled when he struggles up the cave's incline into the light of the sun. But then he realizes, as Socrates says, that the journey upwards signifies "the ascent of the soul into the intellectual world" (Jowett, 1938, p. 269). Then Socrates makes the point "that those who attain this beatific vision are unwilling to descend to human affairs; for their souls are ever hastening into the upper world where they desire to dwell (p. 269)." (Greene, p.427)

In *Orality and Literacy* (1982) Walter Ong discusses at length the nature of the technologies of orality and literacy. He claims that within an oral culture a narrative way of thinking is the only way of thinking that is possible. Ong states that it is the technology of literacy that makes Platonic forms of rational analysis possible.

> Havelock's *Preface to Plato* has . . . shown convincingly how the beginnings of Greek philosophy were tied in with the restructuring of thought brought about by writing. Plato's exclusion of poets from his Republic was in fact Plato's rejection of the pristine aggregative, paratactic, oral-style thinking perpetuated in Homer in favour of the keen analysis or dissection of the world and of thought itself made possible by the interiorization of the alphabet in the Greek psyche (pp .27 - 28).

He points out the connection between Plato's concept of *idea* or *form* to the visual (i.e. the written), since the term *idea* is derived from the same root as the Latin *video*: to see. Platonic form, therefore "was form conceived of by the analogy with visible form, (p.80). The Platonic ideas are voiceless, immobile, devoid of all warmth, not

interactive but isolated, not part of the human lifeworld at all but utterly above and beyond it." Ong goes on to emphasize the necessity of an ability to record thought in writing for the development of logical, analytical thinking.

> Philosophy and all the sciences and 'arts' . . . depend for their existence on writing, which is to say they are produced not by the unaided human mind but by the mind making use of a technology that has been deeply interiorized, incorporated into mental processes themselves. . . . Philosophy, it seems, should be reflectively aware of itself as a technological product - which is to say a special kind of very human product. Logic itself emerges from the technology of writing (p.172).

Reason, Myth and Superstition

Greene (1994) remarks that, "The 18th century, especially in France and England, was marked for many years by apparent victories of human reason over superstition and the authoritarianism of church and state" (p. 428). The form of knowledge common to oral cultures, that is the knowledge found in myth and legend, are still equated with superstition in the minds of many scientific thinkers. Referring to common conceptions of *magic* or *enchantment*, Greene adds, "Indeed, what has been called the 'Enlightenment Project' was a function of what was to be called 'the disenchantment of the world: the dissolution of myths and the substitution of knowledge for fancy' (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972, p. 25)." Drawing on the work of Goody, Ong suggests that major cultural differences in ways of thinking about myth or magic (i.e. differences in "world-views") may be related to the difference between oral and literate forms of communication.

> Jack Goody (1977) has convincingly shown how shifts hitherto labelled as shifts from magic to science . . . can be more economically and cogently explained as shifts from orality to various stages of literacy. I had earlier suggested (1967b, p.189) that many of the contrasts often made between 'western' and other views seem reducible to contrasts between deeply interiorized literacy and more or less oral states of consciousness (p.29).

Ironically, for colonized Aboriginal peoples the consequence of the Enlightenment Project referred to by Greene was the rejection of their traditional way of teaching and learning and is described by the Dene story-teller, Profeit-LeBlanc(1993) as a time of total darkness.

> These heroes of early childhood gradually became blurred once in a regular school system which knew nothing of "Smokehouse Stories." There was a period of darkness, a period totally void of fantasy and the magic of mythological creatures and their adventures - these great super beings who were dauntless and were always able to meet any of the challenges that life placed before them. It was dark and so very quiet. The Native voice was silenced across the land. Dark like the time before Raven stole the daylight. (p. xxv).

Respect for the Authority of the Elders

Ong (1982) describes some differences between cultures related to the different communication forms of orality and literacy, arising from their respective dependence on the human senses of sound or of vision. "Not only communication, but thought itself relates in an altogether special way to sound" (p. 7). He describes the transitory nature of communication which is based on sound (or the spoken word) as compared to written communication which is based on vision (or the written word). "Without writing words have no visual presence . . . . They are occurrences, events" (p.31) and again, "If I stop the movement of sound I have nothing - only silence" (p.32). He explains that oral communication requires special ways of preserving concepts that are automatically preserved in written communication, special techniques to aid memory. Concepts and ideas (in story form) must be repeated aloud frequently and with faithfulness to the intent of the original story. In an oral culture, therefore, elders are greatly respected for their ability to remember the stories and pass them down to the young.

> Since in a primary oral culture conceptualized knowledge that is not repeated aloud soon vanishes, oral societies must invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages. This need establishes a highly traditionalist or conservative set of mind that with good reason inhibits intellectual experimentation. Knowledge is hard to come by and precious, and society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving it, who know and can tell the stories of the days of old. By storing knowledge outside the mind, writing and, even more, print downgrade the figures of the wise old man and wise old woman, repeaters of the past, in favour of younger discoverers of something new (p. 41).

Thus, in contrast to oral cultures where respect for the communal authority of the elders is of the greatest importance, western culture sought to replace the authority of elders (which had transferred politically to Church and State) with an individualism based

on the authority of reason. Referring to the authority of reason, Greene writes, "Disciplined intelligence was viewed as the alternative to blind faith, superstition, and unexamined prejudice . . ." (p. 431). In the western world analytical thought had become the highest form of knowledge and, essentially, the only acceptable form of knowledge.

The Communal and Experiential Nature of Orality

In contrast to the logical, rationalist thought prevalent in western science, oral communication, the spoken word, can never occur in isolation. A listener must be physically present to receive the communication. Orality, therefore, draws humans into close association with one another in a personal, empathetic way . Eigenbrod (1995) writes of the oral influences that can be seen in contemporary Aboriginal literature, referring to the sense of community revealed by the writers.

> Maria Campbell speaks as a representative of her people, as "a Halfbreed woman", and mentions *the* rather than *her* sorrows. The oral transmission of a story is by definition a communal event because it cannot happen without an audience and because the storyteller would only tell a story that is of significance to more than himself or herself. An example of the "as told to" (auto-)biography is Black Elk's life story which starts in the words of the recorder Neihardt: ". . . and if it were only the story of my life, I think I would not tell it; for what is a man that he should make much of his winters . . ." (1932:1). Black Elk goes on to tell the story of a vision; Maria Campbell continues with the story of a struggle, taking the personal point of view to get the reader more intimately connected with a people's struggle for social justice and equality. Both tellers/writers pass on a people's history as a personal story guaranteeing the truth and accuracy of their narrative with their personal experience. However, the "I" speaking or writing in these texts is not the individual "I" of Western society, but rather a communal "I" (p. 98).

Unlike the communal nature of oral knowledge which is embedded in stories, logical-rational communication is elitist. Only the "best minds" with high levels of education can fully understand the intricacies of modern philosophy, science and mathematics. Stories, however, are communal forms of knowledge. As such they are complex and multilayered and can be understood on many different levels. This ensures that all members of the community, including children, can gain some level of knowledge or understanding from them, with the level of knowledge increasing through frequent

repetition of the stories as the person matures. Profeit-Leblanc (1993) describes the multi-level learnings that occur within Aboriginal story telling.

> Since she could remember the young girl had been filled with many stories from her grandmother. Stories of the ancient past. Stories from another time, another world of existence. Stories of great courage, of transformation and trickery. Stories of great tragedies and struggles. Stories of grief and loss and resilience of a people who survived one of the most difficult environments for existence. Tales of wit and humour. . . . Her classroom was the smokehouse and the curriculum being taught was life. She was being prepared for the future. Her mind was being taught to think on all levels and trained to understand things mentally but also emotionally and spiritually. Each concept of the stories was being heard by her heart. . . . She remembered sharing this amazing phenomenon with her friends and they always tried to go with her to Gramma's place to hear the stories. They also liked the fact that each one of them understood the story how they were meant to understand it. No one was marked wrong in this classroom! (p. xviii-xxv)

Personal experience, as discussed by Eigenbrod above, is an important element of communication within oral, story telling cultures, whereas analytical forms of thought attempt to pare away the elements of personal experience. "Oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld . . . . A chirographic (writing) culture and, even more, a typographic (print) culture can distance and, in a way, denature even the human (Ong, p. 42)."

The human lifeworld of oral cultures which is spoken of by Ong is essentially an "experienced" world, in which knowledge is communicated to the community members through story telling. Geographical knowledge among Aboriginal peoples is an example of such experiential knowing, for knowledge of the land is closely related to memories of past events, or experiences. At the same time there is a moral (or sacred) dimension to the knowledge of the land in terms of maintaining "right" relationships with the land, and these moral principles (or ways of behaving on the land) are also conveyed through myths, legends and personal history stories. Cornell (1994) quotes Chief Seattle's statement about the historical relationship of American Aboriginal peoples to the land.

> Every part of this country is sacred to my people. Every hillside, every valley, every plain and grove has been hallowed by some fond memory or some sad experience of my tribe. Even the rocks, which seem to be dumb as they swelter in the sun along the silent

> sea shore in solemn grandeur thrill with memories of past events connected with the lives of my people (Chief Seattle, cited in Cornell, p. 26).

Plato's concept of forms and the promotion of objective, analytical and abstract thinking requires that elements of personal experience be pared away from our studies in order to allow for the generalized theory. In rational-analytic thought it is such generalized theory which allows us to reach the abstract, universal truth. Olson (1993) notes the historical development of various recent educational theories which oppose such objective notions of truth by connecting knowledge and experience.

> The notion that knowledge is constructed through experience has been described by Dewey (1938) and examined by a variety of researchers. Researchers have described this experiential knowing as knowing-in-action (Schon, 1983, 1987), craft knowledge (Tom & Valli, 1990), constructed knowledge (Bruffee, 1986; Duckworth, 1986; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Kelly, 1955), embodied knowledge (Johnston, 1989; Polanyi, 1966), pedagogical thoughtfulness (Van Manen, 1986), and personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1986; Britzman, 1989; Elbas, 1981) (p. 11).

The train of thought Olson describes can be seen to have developed out of the earlier dialectical ideas of Hegel and Marx and out of the European existentialist and phenomenological tradition. In reviewing the historical development of such concepts as the need for *interpretation of experience* and the importance of paying attention to *vantage point and perspective* in human studies, Greene refers to the work of Dewey, Alfred Schutz and the existential phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty (p.432- 437).

> Dewey saw knowledge as coming out of the "complex, dynamic transactions between an active organism and the environment", (that is, *experience*), and he became concerned that thought should lead to "enlightened praxis". "He went on to make the relevant point that this theory of mind does not isolate mind from continuity with the natural world or from the life of the body" (Greene, p. 433, 434).

In their work on teachers' "personal practical knowledge" Clandinin and Connelly (1990) express a similar notion as they reflect on the usefulness of narrative inquiry into the study of *experience*. "The narrative study of experience brings body to mind and mind to body; it connects autobiography to action and an intentional future; it connects these to social history and direction" (p. 245).

The Moral Nature of Orality

Ong (1982) contrasts the main purpose or intent of communication within chirographic, or literate, cultures with the purpose or intent of communication found within oral cultures. He suggests that literate cultures tend to regard speech as a way of sharing information whereas oral cultures are "performance-oriented", (p. 177) or perhaps action-oriented. Story telling is largely a guide to "right" ways of acting or behaving, the making of wise choices. Blaeser (1994) refers to the moral nature of story telling within American Aboriginal oral cultures.

> Storytelling of indigenous peoples . . . can teach a way of living that guarantees future survival. Joseph Bruchac . . . speaks of the 'circle of stories' which reveal to native people the relationships of all things. If we understand "the circularity of the world, how everything is connected and every action produces a result", we can understand our responsibility to the world (p.5).

This discussion of the moral nature of orality takes us back to where the story began, with Plato's rejection of the *imagination* which is inherent in orality as the *corrupter of morality*. When we place Plato's distrust of the poetic, narrative nature of oral communication in the modern context of Hitler's destructive narrative of a superior Aryan race, we can more easily understand the power of his argument. McEwan and Egan (1995) refer to this darker side of narrative while acknowledging the power of narrative to inform and instruct.

> We have forgotten how magnificently the great novelists have contributed to our understanding of ourselves, and of the complex nature of our humanity. . . . But though the story form contributes to our self-understanding, it may just as easily contribute to self-deception. There is a dark side to the functioning of narrative, as our proneness to the seductive power of myths and ideologies suggests. . . . In a less critical vein . . . feminist scholars . . . have identified narrative as an important expression of distinctively feminine values that form connections rather than make divisions, and work collaboratively rather than in hierarchically ordered systems and organizations. Philosophers, too, like Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), Charles Taylor (1989), and Paul Ricouer (1984) have made narrative thought and story an essential part of our cognitive and affective life; one that is firmly connected to ethics and practical affairs (p. xii, xiii).

Blaeser describes the moral aspect of Aboriginal story telling as a body of knowledge or wisdom distilled out of thousands of years of experience. It can be

compared, perhaps, to the Biblical records of the law and the commandments which were also the distillation of oral expressions of experience.

> I do not believe that Native American people are wiser than any other group in America. They are human beings like everyone else. However, the stories are, I firmly believe, the wisest and most useful body of knowledge to be found on this continent. Those stories contain the distilled wisdom of tens of thousands of years of experience. . . . Lesson stories keep the Native people of each generation from repeating errors which their ancestors made (p. 18).

Thus, to be moral, or ethical, narrative must be seen in the light of historical or traditional understandings which are expressed within a communal and consensual setting. Right action within an oral culture must be based on the wisdom of the elders and the process of reaching consensus. The questions of ethics which are found within Platonic or literate forms of thinking are also found in oral forms of thinking or story telling . Socrates raised the familiar analytical question, "Can we say that *Might* is *Right*?" Joseph Bruchac tells of the Aboriginal, story telling approach to the same question.

> It is not brave for a big person to strike a small one - that is a bad example for children. Might does not make right and innumerable tales of smaller, weaker creatures outwitting those who are huge and powerful can be found in every Native tradition. . . . What will happen to you when the day comes when your children are big and strong and you are small and weak? (cited in Blaeser, 1994, p.17)

Split Between Educational Theory and Practice

Educational research is a relative newcomer to the world of science and during its earliest period the field depended heavily on the techniques and principles of natural science for the development of generalized theory. But teaching, by definition, is a practical matter and within education there appears to have been a theory/practice split. It is widely recognized that some advances in theoretical knowledge have been achieved but there has been a growing restiveness about the usefulness of such natural science procedures to the *practice* of teaching (Greene, 1994). Greene explains some of the roots of the perceived restiveness.

> There has been a growing disenchantment with technicism and bland objectivist assumptions. There has been an intensified concern for the particularities of school life

> and for the social and economic contexts that affect what is learned and taught. And, as time has passed, there has been more and more acknowledgement of the importance of perspective and point of view in educational inquiry. . . . Some of the restiveness has been a response to the apparent uselessness of research in overcoming "savage inequalities" (Kozol, 1991) that have plagued the schools and raised obstacles to achievement for so long. Some has been a response to a sense of powerlessness when it comes to the suffering and violations of children and young people: the drug cultures, the endemic violence, the abandonments, the gropings of so many young strangers whose worlds are not understood. A good deal, of course, has been due to the disenchantment mentioned above and to the separation of research or positive inquiry from moral considerations or the ethical perplexities troubling so many Americans today (p.424).

Colonialism and the Need for Healing

The rapid changes taking place in Aboriginal communities throughout the world can only be understood against the background of colonialism. The destructive effects of colonization upon the indigenous peoples of many countries is extensively documented. Ong (1982) writes of the notion of the superiority of European culture which has been evident in scholarly work. " 'Civilized' peoples have long contrasted themselves with 'primitive' or 'savage' peoples, not only in drawing-room conversation or at cocktail parties but also in sophisticated historical works and anthropological studies."(p.174) As a result of that perceived superiority the disappearance of Aboriginal culture has been actively promoted by various governments in a variety of ways, including residential school systems. Blaeser (1994) writes, "Like the dandelions, Native Americans of this country have been seen as a nuisance cluttering up the landscape; like the 'weeds', Indians of this country have been pulled up by their roots and expected to die" (p.3). The experience of the rejection of her Aboriginal culture is described by Profeit-LeBlanc.

> The Native voice was silenced across the land. Dark like the time before Raven stole the daylight. What she didn't realize was that despite the darkness and silence there was still activity in her mind. Activity of conceptual, intellectual development whose basis lay in those early teachings of her childhood. Memorization, analytical skills, recall, and oratory delivery were all deeply embedded and challenged her imagination and creative capacity to the maximum in private moments.
>
> She longed to share the stories of her people's culture heroes and great speakers from the past and in high school wrote a comparative paper in English class. The teacher was not amused that she likened the great stories of her people to the

> Shakespearean tragedies. She did not see any relationship between Lady Macbeth and the woman whose greed overpowered her in the legend of the Blindman and the Loon. The young girl learned to remain silent amongst those who did not know. It was only her grandmother's voice that kept her in school until she finished, completely humiliated and demoralized for having to make excuses for her peoples' noble past. She always remembered her counsel when negative thoughts towards her teachers would come to mind. "Every child is good when they're born. It's just the way others treat them that makes them turn out no good later on. Remember everybody has a little good in them, you just have to look for it. You gonna find it." (1993, p. xxv-xxvi)

However, Aboriginal culture is tenacious. Blaeser continues, " but, again like the globe of dandelion seeds, the tribal heritage, though frail, has proven itself indestructible, has endured and continually renewed itself" (p.3). Nevertheless, the over-all effect of colonization has been massive disruption of cultural stability for Aboriginal people. As a result, the process of healing is a necessary part of any discussion about the present circumstances of Aboriginal people, and is particularly important in the discussion of the meaning and purpose of Aboriginal education. Katz and St.Denis (1991) describe a metaphor of "teacher as healer" while contrasting it to a metaphor of "teacher as technocrat".

> The contrasting model of teacher which prevails in contemporary Western oriented schools is that of the 'teacher as technocrat'. . . . Convinced that education can become more 'scientific' as it becomes more technical, the 'teacher as technocrat' is one who seeks more to separate out specific functions and aims. Possessing techniques becomes the measure of professionalism, but the idea of the teacher as an expert in techniques leads away from the teacher developing a sense of dignity as a person. Teaching becomes professionalized, or bureaucratized, without teachers becoming professionals, or persons whose expertise can be respected because it leads to learning. . . . Informed more by technical knowledge, the teacher as technocrat focuses on putting subject matter into students so they can attain a specified level of intellectual achievement . . . .
>
> The 'teacher as healer' is a powerful metaphor, capable of suggesting new directions in practice. . . . As the fragmentation and alienation of the culture unfolds within the schools (see e.g. Arnowitz and Giroux, 1985; Berger et al., 1973; Sarason, 1982, 1983; Sarason and Klaber, 1985), teaching must welcome back the healing dimension, the task of making things whole. . . . The 'teacher as healer,' and the 'teacher as technocrat' represent pure types; actual teachers often partake of elements from both types. But with schools too often contributing to the crises of individual fragmentation and racial and ethnic oppressions, there is a need for teachers to become more like healers and less like technocrats (p. 25-26).

The complex "Trickster" figure in Aboriginal story telling has been a powerful agent of healing and transformation for centuries. Blaeser (1994) attributes the ability to survive the destructive experiences of colonization to the oral traditions of story telling.

> Is it possible that the oral traditions of a people could be so strong that they allow them to endure and survive all sorts of physical and emotional hardships, not only to endure but to continue the traditions? . . . The Humour, irony and liberation of the trickster stories of oral tradition offer a sustaining power that a tragic world view cannot. . . . Come what may . . . Trickster "just keeps going on", as does the sustaining storytelling tradition in Native American culture. . . . The imagination of Trickster in tribal stories not only helps to sustain native peoples but, Vizenor explains, simultaneously liberates them from circumstances and allows them to imagine themselves more richly. (p.4-7)

Trickster exists outside rational boundaries of time and space, in the limitless world of imagination. Trickster stories break down barriers and open up new possibilities for people. They transform situations through irony, humour and the portrayal of human foibles. "The performance of the tales manages to transform the learning process into a communal, joyful, active process. Trickster errs, we learn. . . . In Trickster tales, truth enters laughing. . . . Lessons are conveyed through these stories by example. Trickster learns lessons the hard way, we learn them the easy way, vicariously." (Blaeser, p.50-55) Blaeser outlines both the conceptual role and the political role played by Trickster stories.

> Ramsey speaks of Trickster and Trickster stories as "a dynamic interposing of the mind between polar opposites, allowing it to hold onto both opposites, as if affirming either/and." Not either/or, but either/and: Trickster mediates between supposed contradictory forces or elements by retaining aspects of both, by revealing them to be coexisting parts of one whole, interconnected, often indistinguishable elements of the one. Ambiguity approaches truth in a way that clarity cannot. . . .
>
> The purpose in early tribal culture was (as it is today) frequently political: to warn those holding power against acting powerful instead of acting like the mediators of power, or, as Ramsey notes, to warn against false customs and false Shamans. . . . The tales, as we have noted, give our tightly patterned thinking and the status quo a 'dressing down'; they reveal the artificial nature of divisions and of social structure, and they reveal the arbitrary and subjective nature of many of our established perceptions. We realize there is no final, ultimate answer, no infallibility that we can blindly accept and follow. Power, like life, is in motion. So, recognizing what Babcock calls the 'as-if nature of social forms and of order' gives way to a new recognition of our individual power and freedom. It is this new state of liberation that engenders creativity, imagination, and life energies. And such an awakening to possibility is precisely the function of Trickster tales that has endured and continues to ensure tribal survival. (pp. 51-57)

Restoration of Balance

In *The Handbook of Qualitative Research* Denzen claims that the post-positivist rational or scientific approach to knowledge is "incommensurable" with a constructivist, experiential, life-centred approach to knowledge; that there is no common ground or "meeting-place" between them (1994). That may be so from a logical, rational point of view, but the concept of science itself is undergoing change. I believe that the verdict is not yet in on the question of commensurability. Trickster may yet reveal to us another possibility. Regarding the incompatibility of scientific and narrative approaches to understanding, I would argue that from a concern for balance and for the creation of a more humane, equitable and sustainable society the two approaches to understanding, or knowledge, are a necessary complement to one another.

> Indeed, if we follow recent scholarship in this matter, it becomes clear that narrative is essential to the purpose of communicating who we are, what we do, how we feel, and why we ought to follow some course of action rather than another. . . . Stories, it would seem, have a vital role to play in helping us to understand the curriculum, the practices of teachers, the processes of learning, the rational resolution of educational issues, and the matter of practising how to teach in informed and sensitive ways (McEwan and Egan, 1995, p. xiii).

III. Looking Back: The Teachers' Stories Begin

Invitation to Listen

The stories of eight Dogrib teachers are presented here. They tell of the teachers' experiences of growing up in their traditional culture in their northern homeland and of the paths they have followed in becoming fully certified teachers in their own communities, in the midst of the unsettling process of rapid cultural change. Each teacher's story is individual and distinct, rich with the detail of individual memory, but their stories weave in and out among each other and their themes become inseparably intertwined. Together they create the story of what it has been like to be born into a land-based, hunting and gathering culture in Canada's Western Arctic and to mature into adulthood in a rapidly advancing, global, technological culture. The stories have been presented in an interwoven and blended form to create a single larger story.

The stories come from spoken stories: spoken in the rhythmic, melodic cadences and culturally distinct dialect of English that are characteristic of the Dogrib people. They are not stories that have been carefully prepared, revised and scripted. They are the spontaneous, informal stories told in conversation, with pauses, repetitions and changes of direction as the story-teller gathers her thoughts and rephrases them in a new way. They are often shared with laughter or a twinkling of the eyes as past experiences come to life again in the retelling. They are retold here in the story-tellers' own words, with a minimum of editing to make the reading easier.

The stories are able to stand alone. They need no further interpretation to give them a reason for being. They are powerful stories; charming, entertaining, inspirational and filled with information about the Dogrib cultural heritage. They reveal some of the similarities and the differences between Dogrib culture and traditional Euro-Canadian culture. I invite you to come and listen to the stories; to hear them imaginatively, as though they were being told directly to you.

The teachers have gathered now, moving their chairs into a closer circle. The researcher-narrator sits off to one side, hoping to remain unobtrusive; to speak only enough to set the stage and link the stories together. We invite you to come and join the story circle; to hear the stories as though they were being told for the first time, especially for you. Pour yourself a fresh cup of hot tea and pull your chair up closer to the fire. Listen quietly as the teachers take you to their northern homeland, weaving magic with their tales.

Remembering the Past

Life in a Small Community

The Dogrib teachers have grown up in the midst of the rapid changes which occurred as the result of increased federal government involvement and industrial development in the north. In their lifetimes they have seen their people move from a hunting and gathering way of life to one primarily based on work for wages. They have had very different experiences than the Dogrib children now growing up in the nineteen nineties, for they have lived their lives looking both forward and back. They are the bridge between the old and the new; for they have stood with one foot in each way of life.

Lena described what it was like growing up in her small, isolated community. They had moved to a new location and had to begin by building new log homes.

> I think I was about seven or eight when we first moved here. I remember that my Mom was helping my Dad to haul the woods, - haul the logs back here for the houses, and I saw a lot of people working on their houses. I think they used a hand saw or something like that. Those real long ones. They used that. And I remember, they would haul them in by boat too. I don't know where they were getting the logs from but they were hauling them in by the boat. And I saw a lot of women helping their husbands build the house. It was a lot of hard work. They stayed in the tent and in the teepee. But after they finished building their house they moved into it. And I remember they were having (I don't know whose house it is. I can't remember) but after they finished they had a feast and a dance in there, in one of the houses. To celebrate, I think.
>
> The kids, they were just playing around, playing out in the bush and playing "hide and go seek" and games like that, while their Moms and Dads were busy building the houses. Yeah, I remember we were playing there. I was playing with the kids. We were playing "hide and go seek". There were a lot of kids.

Maybe it was from the films (I don't know) - they were playing Indians and Cowboys. You know how it is. When the kids are small they play that. I know that kids are just - you know, like just pretending that they're shooting at each other and that they fall down. I remember that too.

Their lives followed a seasonal rhythm. In summer, hunting for caribou and netting fish were important parts of their survival from the land.

In summer they went up to Round Rock Lake and they would shoot caribou and they would bring it back here. And sometimes the women went with their husbands and they would bring the meat back, and I remember they were drying some meat. And sometimes they would catch fish too. They would make dry fish too. And I don't see a lot of - mmm, like right now we have stores, a lot of groceries on the shelf and all that, - but at that time there wasn't hardly any. And even though it was like that, people weren't complaining or anything like that. 'Cuz they mainly live on the fish and caribou.

Fall brought a large harvest of fish which was an important winter food for the sled dogs.

In September, when they went fishing, they caught a lot of fish and they would have a fish stick. They would make a fish stick for the winter - for the dogs, - and they would use it for eating too. So, in September there's a lot of fish too. We went along with Dad if he needed help, my sister and I. We helped too. We would take the fish out of the net. We would help my Dad make a fish stick. Like, you would make a hole in the fish, in the middle of the stomach, and you would put a post inside it. There would be about five or six in each row and we would make a fish stick like that for the winter.

Trapping was a winter seasonal activity. Lena related a story of a special memory from her childhood related to trapping.

In winter time they do a lot in trapping until Christmas, but after Christmas the fur is not that good. Like, the fur would come off and so they usually do their trapping before Christmas. They would take it to Rae, to the Bay, to the Northern Store, or to Arnie's Store, or they would sell it to the Renewable Resources.

When I was small, in winter time we were living here and I remember that my Dad said he was going to go to Rae. We ran out of groceries so he had to go in, and it took him a week. He was out there for a week. And we were all left, just the neighbours' house and our house. Just the two houses that time, the families were living here. And just before my Dad went to Rae he said to watch out for that trap that he set at the point - at the point there. He said that if you see a small dark thing you would know that an animal is trapped.

So after he left the next day I was looking out the window and I saw something black. And I told my sister, "For sure there's gotta be something there. You should check on it like Dad said we should do." So we got our snowshoes ready and we just ran there. And sure enough when we got there, there was a fox, and he was just going around. At that time I didn't know how to shoot. I didn't know how to shoot with a rifle but my sister knew it, but she didn't want to shoot it. And she was just yelling at me to shoot it. And I said "No, you do it." Finally she shot at it.

And after that when we got back , our neighbour's wife was at my house and she said that she never saw us going there. And she thought that there was some people coming. And she thought that we were an Inuit person. [*laughter*] My Mom said, "She ran in here. She said, 'There's people coming!' " My Mom said there wasn't. "It's only my daughters" she said. "They went out there."

And when we got back we brought the fox in. We didn't know how to skin it so my Mom told us what to do and we skinned the fox. After a week when my Dad came back we told him about the fox and how we skinned it with the help of Mom, and he said "You both did a good job." He said that even though you're not men you know how to do it, to skin the fox. He told us that. And you know the things like that, it's really a good feeling what they say. Because even though we don't know how to do it we tried our best. We did.

Spring was a time for travelling by dog sled to the gathering centre of Ft. Rae. It was a time to greet friends and participate in the Easter celebrations.

And after my Dad went to Rae and they got back then we stayed here for the whole winter. And then after that we went back in April, I think, for Easter. We went back to Rae. We would visit our friends and celebrate our Easter. We would go have midnight mass. After that, the next day they would have a feast and a drum dance and a hand game going on. After that is all over, people went back to their home again. And it would always be the same again. We would go out here in the summer and then we would go back in April to Rae.

We still used dog-team at that time. In April it's kind of warm like. That time it was kind of warm like. But right now when I look at the weather and see it's still cold like, it's not like before. You know you could see the water dripping in April but now it's not like that. The kids rode in the sled. All the way. When we were travelling back I can hear the kids singing, so I guess they enjoyed it.

A priest used to come and visit us by dog team once a month - no, not once a month but maybe three months, I think. But he either came in by plane in the summer or else in the winter time he used to come in here by the dog team. And we did the mass service. He stayed here for three or four days and then he would go back to Rae. Then he went to other communities.

Handcrafts provided recreation for both women and men as well as providing useful and necessary articles for use in their daily lives. Mary Ann described her mother's skill at sewing in her younger years.

My Mom did a lot of the crafts when she was younger. Right now she's in her seventies and she's losing it, but she used to make all kinds of jackets for my Dad. Beaver - beaver fur jacket, caribou hide jacket. Just designed them really nice. But she lost it about six, seven years ago. What d'you call it? Alzheimer's disease, something like that. She doesn't do anything. Doesn't even sew. But when I was younger she always sewed. I always saw her sew.

Lena remarked on the different roles of men and women in the community.

> The women, they mostly did sewing and knew how to make hides and all that but we never - we never did any hand game. Like right now, when I watch it on the TV, I would see Yukon women playing hand games with the men, while here it's not like that. Men, they just do their own drumming, singing and playing hand games. I've never seen the women play the drum. I don't know why is that. Maybe that men think that only men can play the hand game or things like that. I don't know - it's been like that from generation to generation, so I guess it's that.

Young People's Responsibilities

Traditionally all of the members of Dogrib families were expected to contribute to the well-being of the family, but the oldest child in particular had a responsibility to help out. Mary Ann described the responsibilities placed on her as she grew towards adulthood.

> I didn't get home 'til I was about fifteen years old. I was just mostly in school. When I came back from school my parents, they were ending up drinking and just leaving us alone and then I would go out in the bush with my grandparents. That's where I learned how to cut dry fish. [*chuckle*] When I first did my beading (when I came back from school my Mom asked me to do beading) that time I was really slim. I didn't have my fat. I would sit on the couch and have my legs way up against my chest. And my Mom would tell me "Be like a lady", she says. "Don't sit like that", you know. "Be like a lady. Sit up right when you're sewing", she said. 'Cuz I was young and I was slim and I didn't have any fat, so that's how I sewed beads, eh. [*laughter*] I still remember.
>
> I was the second eldest in the family and I had to take care of my siblings. My oldest sister took off on my parents and she provided for them with income. And my little ones, she was helping them at home. But she took off on my parents, so my parents they paid for my plane fare from the residential school at Ft. Smith. I was in grade seven and they ended up making me baby-sit.
>
> So I did odd jobs. I worked in the hospital as a (like what do you call it?) - home care, cleaning and things like that. Then I worked with Sister, - Sister Mon Petite I think. That's the time she was selling beads and doing sewing stuff and things like that. I worked with her for a while. And I went to the store. I got a job at the store so I started working at the store. I didn't have my grade ten and twelve so I just did odd jobs in my younger years to provide for my family. They were getting welfare but they didn't get very much. So since I was the oldest I had to provide for my family.

Traditional Ways of Teaching and Learning

Learning from Grandparents and Other Elders

In the past, Dogrib traditions, values and knowledge of the land have been passed from generation to generation informally, through direct teaching and modelling; and

through oral story telling. The learning often occurred through close contact between children and their grandparents. Louisa spoke of the importance of going out on the land with her grandparents and of learning to trust in their knowledge and understanding of the natural environment.

> And a lot of the experiences that I had as a young child I think really helped me form the basis for my education. Because I was from a large family and my Mom was sick with TB and had to be hospitalized for about two years. I remember my grandparents taking me with them wherever they were going. If they were out on the land, when I was afraid of noise, or things out there, they would explain what animals they were. I would go home and they would stay with us for awhile and then they would take other grandchildren with them out on the land for a while. And I always looked forward to when it was my time to go out there with them. I think some of it was to get away from having to do the share of the house cleaning or house keeping or whatever it was. [*chuckle*] But I really enjoyed being out there with them.
>
> Some experiences really stick out in my mind. One of them was when it was spring time (or else it could have been fall. I'm not sure) but I remember the ice on the lake and that we had to go across. And just hearing the cracking of the ice was a really scary experience for me. But I would always remember my grandfather walking up ahead in front of the dogs with a long pole testing the ice. And just the amount of trust that you have to put into people, and all the knowledge that they've gained!
>
> And I think that may have been the reason why I always need to know. If I don't know something, then I need to find out. And just being out there with my grandparents and my parents, I think that really helped me a lot.

Learning from Living on the Land

For the Dogrib people their close connection to the land is a highly treasured aspect of their cultural heritage. It was through experiences on the land that much of their most valued informal learning took place and they spoke of the importance of learning through being in close association with their elders. The Dogrib teachers told a number of stories about their good memories of camping out on the land as young children.

Mary Rose described the traditional learning experiences of her grandmother and the value her grandmother placed on learning. "My grandmother, even though she was never educated, she always said she was educated in the bush." Mary Rose went on to say that it was her grandmother who had encouraged her to go on and get an education, because it was important for the future.

Rita too learned a great deal from being on the land with her parents and grandparents, before the time when she had to leave to go to residential school. There was a natural rhythm to their lives which followed the appropriate seasons for the hunting and trapping of each animal in turn. She feels fortunate to have spent so much time learning in the traditional Dogrib way.

> We lived off the land more in my younger days. My parents were always on the land, especially with my grandparents. My grandparents and my parents were always on the land, summer and winter. Because in the summer time they went and lived in their fishing camp, and then muskrat season was the same. In the winter time there was the caribou and then when my Dad went trapping before Christmas we were always out in the land.
>
> So I learned a lot just being with my family. And then when I went to school I learned schooling going through residential school, but then after I went back with my parents, I learned more again as I grew older. So I was just learning from my own parents and my own relatives and then listening to the elders. I picked up a lot just watching and listening. So as you practised and as you listened you got more exposure to your culture.

In a similar way, Rosalie spoke of her early experience of learning profound truths of life and death, and of learning to trust in the elders.

> I remember many, many summers that we spent our summers just out camping overnight, here and there all over the place. And I also saw my father killing animals for food. One summer, as we were going out my father said, "Well, we might spend a couple of nights out in camp," so we just packed and left. And as we were travelling by boat we would stop to make campfires and stuff like that, and this one evening it was just beautiful. The water was just calm, you know. Maybe it would have been, - like eleven o'clock. We were still travelling by boat. Just, (you know), go wherever we have to go I guess - the destinations. I don't have a clue where we were going. But the way we were travelling, the lake was really just like a quicksand. In Dogrib they call it *ehtl'e endaa*. I don't know what they would call it in English. But the water is very shallow. But the elders, they know the trailways. They know exactly which way to go out on the lake and the trailway. If they follow the trailway the water's a little bit deeper, but if you go off the trail the boat will just get stuck - because the water's really shallow.
>
> But as we were travelling these *ehtl'e endaa*, we came along a shore. We were travelling along a shore and my father slowed the motor. For some reason he slowed down the motor so we were going very, very slow. And just from the shore, along the bush, you could see the moose coming down to get a drink of water. And as it came down to get a drink of water the calf came following it. We were all sitting in the boat, eh. And my mother said, "Duck down, duck down. Put your head down." You know, 'cuz my father was going to shoot the moose from behind us. And I must have been really small because I was crying; begging my father not to shoot the calf. I said "Daddy, don't shoot it. It's so cute," you know. I was trying to tell my father not to do it. But my father said, "Rosalie, no matter how cute an animal is we've got to kill it. We've got to

kill it because it's our food and it's our clothing." And I never said anything to that. That was kind of a teaching to me, eh. And so, my father shot both the cow and the calf.

Learning Through Helping in the Family

Traditionally each member of the family was needed to contribute to the work of providing food, clothing and shelter for the family; and the children's learning was intimately connected to the family's daily needs. Young people learned the skills required under the supervision of older family members. Rosalie spoke of her memories of working together at their family winter camp and of her regret that her current lifestyle allows so little opportunity to use her land-based skills..

> One year we went out on the winter camp because my father wanted to go trapping and all four of my brothers went trapping with him. So my father decided to take the whole family. So we all went out in the camp as a whole family. That was the first year (I think I was about fourteen or fifteen) I learned how to get the proper wood because my brothers were teaching me what kind of wood to get. And also I learned how to set a net, check the nets, set snares; do all the basics; going ptarmigan hunting and stuff like that.
>
> So after that winter trip, every year my mom made sure I set nets, for many, many, many years. [*chuckle*] And just across from the lake there were areas where you could set your nets. My mother would say, "Go set your nets up there." Just a short net, eh. Just to keep us going over the winter. So I had to do that. And also, in the winter time, most of my friends would be out in the bush getting wood. But I didn't have to do that because I had lots of older brothers who did all the collecting wood and all that. But once in a while I would tell my Mom, "Mom, I want to go out. I want to go get some wood with my friends." But my Mom wouldn't let me. [*chuckle*] I don't know. Lots of teenagers go out in the bush and get wood but she wouldn't let me do that.
>
> But I learned many other skills from my Mom. Like, I did a lot of sewing with her, - the beadwork. She taught me to make all the clothing. Because she needed me to help her with it, eh. So many boys in the house, you know. So I had to help her make moccasins, mitts, parkas and all that. Also tanning hides. She taught me how to tan hides, skin animals and stuff like that.
>
> But I feel like it was all wasted. Now I don't use it anymore, I'm so busy working!

With those pensive words Rosalie highlighted the difference between her mother's life experiences as a Dogrib woman living in a traditional, slowly evolving, hunting and gathering culture and her own experience of life in a rapidly changing technological culture. The sense of loss of the highly valued, intimate connection with the land and the animals resonates through her words.

> As of today, whenever I go back to my home community I will do all these things for my Mom. Get spruce boughs for her smoke house, help her with scraping hides or cleaning fish, cleaning ducks. I just love it. You know, I haven't lost anything yet. But sometimes I do miss going out on the land. And I need it. My body needs it. My body craves for it. So I have to remember to go out on the land - as much as I can. But as of now I'm really busy, so I don't do it a whole lot.

Learning Syllabics

A more recent form of learning was introduced to the people by European missionaries. In the eighteen hundreds Oblate priests were sent as Catholic missionaries to the Dogrib area. They began the work of teaching a system of syllabics for recording the Dene languages. Rosalie told about how her father came to learn to read and write using syllabics.

> My father - he said he was very, very young when he lost his father. Like, his father died when he was about six or seven. And the loss was extreme for my father and his brothers and sisters. He had two older brothers - no I think he had three older brothers, and one older sister. He's the youngest, the baby of the family. And when he lost his father it was a great loss. The elders had spent a lot of time, you know. Spending time with the family. But the grieving was just too much for them to take.
>
> So finally the elders decided that, if we teach them syllabics it will occupy their mind for them. They won't have to think about their loss too much. So then the elders started coming around and they would teach them how to read and write Bible syllabics and also learn the songs, - the Dogrib songs that they sing in church, - the choirs. So that's how my father learned his syllabics.

First Experiences of Formal Schooling

Summer Tent School

Louisa's first experience of formal schooling took place in a summer tent school taught by people from outside the Dogrib community, before she went on to residential school at a later date. She described her memories of the tent school experience.

> As far back as I can remember, the last place that my parents were living in was Rae Rock. They went out on the land a lot, and hadn't lived in Rae, so we were living on Rae Rock. My Dad and my brother were working there at that time. My first experience with formal education was out there when, in the summer time, (it must have been some sort of a summer project or something) there were a group of people that went there, and they pitched up about two tents, I think.

> And then they gathered all the children to the tent and they gave us the hot chocolate and vitamin biscuits. [*chuckle*] And we were all sitting there and I remember being there with my brothers and sisters and then they started giving names out to people. And they told me what I was called. But I'd never been called that all my life. I've got a Dogrib name. And I remember running away from them, [*laughter*] because it wasn't my name and it didn't make sense to me, or else maybe it frightened me. I'm not sure what the reason was , but anyway I remember running away from them. And maybe I did go back later on because it may have been fun, but I don't really remember much about that.

Literacy Through Syllabics

Although public school was Rosalie's first experience of institutional education it was not her first experience of literacy. Her introduction to literacy began at home under her father's guidance and was a richly rewarding experience. She related how her father had taught her the alphabet when she was a small child. She chuckled then as she paused to reflect on the difference between her own oral cultural tradition and the literacy-based, Euro-Canadian culture. With a broad smile and a twinkle in her eye she commented "That's English thing, OK?" before going on with her story.

> When I was growing up my parents were very, very traditional. We did a lot of traditional activities at home. One thing I always remember to this day is my father would always teach me how to say my alphabet. And also my father would teach me how to count, all one to one hundred in Dogrib, and then from one hundred all the way back to one. And he would do that with me every day. And also he would go over the Dogrib syllabics. You know, in the Bible, those syllabics that they use. He wanted to teach us how to read and write syllabics so he would practice reading and writing syllabics with us. There was myself and I had four older brothers and also one older sister, so between six of us, in the evenings, we would practice. My father would read us syllabic Bible stories, and it got to the point where we were all able to read a little bit in the Bible and also we were able to write notes to each other.
>
> So after awhile I guess I've gotten really good at it. So sometimes, if my father went out to other people's home to play cards you know, my mother would say, "Why don't you go and ask your dad for money?" But it's embarrassing to go into a card game and ask your father for money so my Mom would say, "Write a note." So I would write a note to my father and give it to him and then he would give me the money.

Rosalie laughed again as another memory surfaced.

> But a couple of times I remember (I was the youngest one at the time), in the evenings when he came home he would take out the letter and read it back to me, exactly what I had said. And if I had made a mistake he would help me with corrections. One time he read it back to me and I was going to write, "My mother asked you to give her money. She wants to play cards." But I said it completely differently. But he's a really understanding person, eh, and he knew what I was talking about for some reason (just

trying to figure it out) and he gave me the money. It was really a funny thing; really, really funny. [*laughter*]

To this day he still reads. Like, whenever I go and visit he would read me some stories from the Bible and he would also teach me some songs. And whenever I forget the rosary prayers he will go over that with me and teach me that.

Residential School

Either residential schools or public schooling were an important part of the teachers' growing up years. It was a way of learning that few of the Dogrib people from previous generations had experienced. Mary Ann described the unusual way in which she found herself in residential school.

I was born in Red Rock mine. That was the time there was a mine there. And from there the kids were going on the plane to Fort Smith for residential school. Like they go to school in September and come back in July. A long time ago, I don't know how I got on the plane. [*laughter*] I was small, about five, six. I got on the plane without my parents knowing it. I ended up in Snare. [*laughter*] I remember - I remember that so I made a story. About the yellow big bird. A big yellow bird. I fell asleep in the plane and I ended up in Ft. Smith. [*chuckle*]

It was pretty good there but it was strict. Not too, too strict but you know - like every Sunday we would go to church. Every morning I would get up in the morning, then do my chores. Everybody's got chores to do, scrubbing the whole place before you start school. Then in the evening we would study. Same routine. Getting up in the morning, eating porridge, go to school. [*chuckle*] But some kids they were - they were well off. Better than us so they had a chance to go home for Christmas for about two weeks. Then their flight would be paid back to Ft. Smith. But some kids, their parents didn't have any money so they couldn't go anyplace, eh. They stayed there for the whole ten months. I liked the school but the town kids would always tease - tease us of our clothes and how we looked.

But we had fun going sliding. Sliding down the rapids. Going towards the rapids we would watch out. One time a whole bunch of the students - that's the time they didn't have any vehicle, including a bus or anything - we had some kind of a truck with a (what d'you call those?) like a cardboard box around the top. And they had a chain right across it.

I remember one girl from Ft. MacPherson, I think. She fell off that vehicle. She fell off and she hit her head first and her skull opened, cracking. She died. I remember that girl when I was young. We were all going out for a picnic. Long time ago.

Lena reminisced about her time in residential school and her words paint a vivid picture of what the experience was like. She told of her struggle to relate the way of learning she experienced in the residential school to the more familiar and traditional way

of learning by listening respectfully to the elders. She emphasized her community's current efforts to pass on to the children the value of respect for the elders.

> I remember when I left for my school and I used to talk only Dogrib. But when I got to the residence and I stayed for a year I forgot how to speak my language for a while. And then when I heard my Mom speak the Dogrib, I started picking up again. First of all, I didn't really understand what they were saying, but at that time I was kind of young. So then when they started talking to me in Dogrib again I could pick up words again.
>
> My sister came along and some others too. Other kids were there too. There were nuns looking after the kids there at the residential school. I was so surprised when the nuns they were strict. They didn't want us to use our language like, to speak to one another in the residential school. So if we wanted to speak to one another we always had to do it outside, outside of class. Otherwise we'll be punished. I don't know why it was done at that time, why it was like that. I think maybe because of that reason that now it's changed. Like, they want two cultures. You know, they want us to speak our own language and then learn our culture and also the others' culture, and learn more about education too.

Lena remembered struggling to adjust to the daily routine of having to do chores.

> And when I first went there I didn't know that we would have chores to do. Like, in our residence - when we went to residence. Like when we were home we didn't have to worry. Well, all the time I was small, I didn't have to worry about doing dishes and things like that, fixing my bed. But when we went to the school I remember doing all those. Like, I had to wash the washroom and clean my own bed and help with things around. You know, tidy up our clothes and all that. Keep our - what everyday clothes we had to use, we had to put in order like. It was like that. I found it so funny. Like I was kind of, you know, frustrated. "Why do I have to do this and all that?" That's what I kept thinking, saying that to myself. "This wasn't what I've been taught at home." I was thinking like that too. And then, "That's the way I guess they have to teach us," I thought to myself again. You know, like, "I'm just being moved out from my house to the school and now here I have to do things like that," I was thinking. My mind was thinking like that.

Getting up early on a daily basis was difficult. But reflecting back later, Lena related the experience to the guidance she had received from her father before going to residential school.

> And then, they had to wake us up early. Sometimes they woke us up around six o'clock and the nuns would put the light up and say, "Time for church," like Benediction - what do you call it? Every morning at six o'clock. Before breakfast! Yeah, at six o'clock! And I thought, "Sheeze! The nuns always have to wake me up! Time to get up! They always tell me that." I would just finally lie back in bed [*laughter*] but then I'd just drag myself up.
>
> Then I remembered. I know my Dad used to do that to us too. Sometimes he would wake us up early in the morning and chase us outside to do wood cutting and all that. And I was kind of mad, because I never ate anything and he had to chase me out. I

was thinking to myself that. And then one time he told us, "You know why I'm doing this?" He told us that. I said, "I have no idea why you're doing this." "It's for your own good," he said. "I hope that you know what I mean." But as I grew up I kept remembering that, remembering that, and when I was on my own I just remembered what he meant. He said that I have to - (like if I have to go back to where I have to wake up myself), - then that's the reason why he was doing that. To be an independent person, like. And I didn't know until after, when I was on my own then. You know, like I have to wake myself up early. Get up early out of bed. That's what he was trying to teach us. That's what I told my sister too and she said, "You're right." And even though the elders, they teach us those things, but we never know. Like, so many times I kept saying to myself , "Why is he doing this to us? Does he have to do it?" But now I know what he meant, you know. Why he was doing that.

Maybe the kids here, the parents, they do that to them but the kids never understand. And I told my son that. I talked to my son and I told him that's how we have been raised. "That's what I'm teaching you." I keep telling him that, you know? So I told the students that they should listen to their elders and respect their elders, because that's how the elders have been taught by their own parents too. And that's what they're teaching you, I told the kids. I told them that it's not me that is telling you this. It's been passed on to me. And they ask me questions. If I know the answer I will give it to them. It's good. I'm not the only one that talks to them like that. There's others - the other staff, they talk like that to the students too. And it's really helpful to them.

Louisa remembered not being allowed to speak Dogrib at residential school but told of her desire to learn to speak English so that she would be able to communicate with other people who did not speak Dogrib.

In my experience in Ft. Smith as a young person going to residential school, I really didn't mind going to school at all. But I remember that we were forbidden to talk our language. But then, we also wanted to learn English so we could communicate with other people. I remember a friend (there were about three or four of us) and we were pretending that we were talking in English and we were just mumbling or uttering a whole bunch of different nonsense [chuckle]. But I remember doing these things with them.

Nora also spoke positively about some of the aspects of her experience of being in residential school.

Being too rigid sometimes reminds me of when I was in the hostel [residential school]. Yet now when I look back and reflect on it those were the greatest years of my life I think now, where I learned to be independent: where I learned to communicate and accept other people of different cultures for who they are and accept the good sides of them and try to find only the good in people and build on that. And I think that's what I try to bring into the classroom is to build on what's good, what good qualities that kid has. In most cases that has worked.

Early Foundations for Wanting to Become a Teacher

Influence of Family Members

Louisa spoke of the importance of her family members in influencing her decision to become a teacher.

> The other thing that really made me want to learn more I think, was my older brother. I remember when we were in Rae Rock he got a job picking nails off the road and then from there, - I don't know who that worker was - but he took an interest in him and he went out with that man with power poles, where they were putting up wires for the power poles. And from there he got interested in electricity and he got his journeyman's in electricity and he's an electrician. And I think the fact that somebody, a family member, was able to achieve that made me want to be able to do the same thing.
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> I didn't hear it directly and I didn't remember a lot of it and my parents never told me themself, but one lady was telling us, "Your Mom really, really did a lot for all of you. In the fall time when it gets really, really windy, when your Mom is out in the bush with your family, and then in the fall time all the men would go out for caribou hunt, your Mom would take some of you to Rae with a boat to make sure that you got on a plane to go to residential school." Sometimes it was so windy that she had to stay on an island with us, but I don't have much memory of that. And it must have been my older brothers and sisters that she took out first.
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> But they were telling me those things and I kept thinking about what made her really want us to go to school. And then I thought about her two years at the hospital [in Edmonton]. And one of the things that she kept saying all the time is that she wasn't able to communicate her wants and needs to the nurse or the nuns who were there at that time. And it was really, really frustrating for her. And the fact that people were doing things to her body and making her take medication or pills and she didn't know for what. It was really, really frustrating for her. I think that must have been one of the reasons why she really pushed us to go to school.

Influence of Teachers and Other Community Leaders

Louisa went on then to talk about other influences which had significance for her and which had led her to become a teacher.

> I guess having the right kind of teachers along the way also really helped me become interested in learning, just for the sake of knowledge. I remember a grade seven teacher especially because he introduced us to a wide range of music. I've never heard folk songs before and he'd tell us the story that's related to the song. And ballad and all those classical music - because in Rae or else in a lot of smaller community we usually just hear country western music. So just being exposed to all these kinds of different kind of music, and to find out that there's a story behind these things, I think it also really helped me a lot.
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> And also introducing us to all sorts of reading materials. He really got me interested in science fiction. And I think just the fact that you don't really know. Things

could be this way, or else there could be life forms somewhere else. It really - I think that's what really keeps me wanting to learn more. To see if these things could happen or else maybe in the future a lot of the things could happen.

Just also being involved in a lot of the things that were there available for us. I went through Brownies. I went through Girl Guides. I went through Rangers. So I was picking up different hobbies along the way. And it taught us crafts and it also taught us to be able to do things, and helping yourself be able to do things and working as a group to be able to do things. And just having the right people in your life at the time when you sort of need them also has helped a lot.

Memories of Communication Frustrations

Memories of not being able to communicate in school were strong motivating factors for many of the Dogrib teachers. In the small, multi-grade school in her settlement, Rosalie was taught by southern, English speaking teachers. In contrast to her pleasant experiences of learning at home with her father, the difficulty of communicating with teachers who did not understand her language or culture was a frustrating experience for her during her early grades.

Like most young girls in their early school years she admired her teachers and looked for their approval. But for Dogrib speaking children attending an English language school the difficulty in trying to communicate with their teachers often created deep confusions and frustrations. Rosalie spoke Dogrib fluently but knew only a little English. Her words paint a picture of what school must have been like for many northern Dene children at that time. It was the memory of those deep frustrations and the hope of making things better for the children in their communities which kept some of the teachers moving along the path to becoming teachers themselves.

OK, I'll just briefly tell you why I became a teacher. When I was going to school in my community, when I was starting my primary school I always enjoyed my teachers. Like, I always had female teachers and I always admired them. One of the most difficult times I've had in school was not being able to express myself. The primary teachers spoke only English and I was very fluent in Dogrib. I didn't really speak a whole lot of English at the time. So whenever I tried to explain myself I'd know exactly what I wanted to say and what I'm feeling in Dogrib. But because I didn't have the language I couldn't express myself clearly to the teachers. So I've gotten into some troubles I still remember.

> The old type of school, the classrooms you know, - the classroom settings with the table in the rows and all that! In those days (this was a kindergarten to grade three class and it was a multi-grade class, eh) the desks were always in a row and you knew what grade you were by the number of the row you're sitting at. When we did seat work, when the teachers would give us paper work, during seat work we were not allowed to get up. And one time I needed to get up to get glue or something and the teacher got upset about it. She said, "You're not supposed to be out of your seat. Get back to your seat right now." And I wanted to say, "Well, I need the glue. I don't have the glue" and I couldn't express that. 'Cuz I didn't have the language for it, eh? I think maybe I was in grade one or something. And the teacher got mad at me. I can't remember the punishment for it, or the discipline, but I remember being very, very upset about it. Like a big thing!
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> And another time, this cousin of mine, he and I were very, very close, like we played together a lot. And he was always picking on me and he was always calling me names, like he was a bully. And in school I remember one time and he was just bugging me. He wouldn't leave me alone and I just got so tired of it. I kind of whacked him in the stomach. This was in grade one again.

Rosalie laughed as she remembered that part of the story and then grew serious again as she went on to say,

> The teacher didn't see what was going on. But the only thing she saw was me punching my cousin in the belly and so I was standing in the corner. I don't know for how long, and again I was trying to tell my teacher, "Well, I'm tired of him bugging me. I don't want him bugging me. He's always bugging me." I wanted to say that, but I didn't have the language. So I was put in the corner for that. That was kind of like punishment for not understanding the language.

Mary Rose also spoke of a childhood difficulty with communicating with teachers in school. For her, the difficulty of communicating was part of her residential school experience. This became part of her reason for wanting to be a teacher, along with her enjoyment of being with young children.

> I think part of becoming a teacher was that when I was growing up I struggled because of the second language. My first language was Dogrib, and it was quite a struggle for us, especially when we were being sent to a residential school in Ft. Smith. And at that time too they didn't have any translator or whatever, you know, so we just had to be on our own trying to figure out what the teachers were saying. And even when I was nine or ten years old I didn't even know what a vowel was, long vowel, short vowel. I didn't understand it. And now I realize, kids with a second language, what a struggle for them.

Taking Back the Responsibility for Their Children's Education

Like other Dogrib teachers Anna shared the desire to become a teacher so that she could help the children in her community to be more comfortable in the public schools. But Anna had an additional motivation for wanting to continue with her teacher education.

The rapidly changing lifestyles occurring in the Dogrib communities had their origin in increased government activity in the north. Federal government involvement in the lives of the Dene people in the north increased steadily after World War II. That involvement brought massive changes to the lives of the northern indigenous people. Responsibility for many aspects of their lives was assumed by government agencies. The power of the Dene people to control their own lives was drastically undermined. Knowing this, Anna didn't want to be *just* a Dogrib language teacher for the rest of her life. She wanted to be able to teach everything.

For Rita, too, becoming a teacher meant developing to a higher level in her work and gaining greater ability to be of help within her community. It also meant becoming empowered to be able to teach their own culture and language to the Dogrib children. She spoke of gaining support and encouragement for continuing on to further learning from talking with other Dogrib classroom assistants.

> After so many years of being a classroom assistant it's like you go nowhere but just do your daily routine as a classroom assistant. And there are times when you needed to teach some things, like in your culture or language in those days. It's like we didn't have the kind of knowledge that we needed to use, in order to help our own Dogrib children.
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> And I found out that if we remained as a classroom assistant and were not going further we wouldn't reach our goal where we wanted to get into a position higher than just being a classroom assistant. So one day we were given opportunities, and we classroom assistants that have been working together for years, we started to talk about what we should do. And we knew that a lot of aboriginals from the north, they went to T.E.P.'s, and they graduated and they made it, even though they have big families. So we all decided that we should go for the T.E.P. program.
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> I found that being a classroom assistant for so many years, all the teachers that we worked with, they were different type of teachers, and they had different skills too, different ideas, different knowledge, and they had different backgrounds too. But they shared a lot and they gave us a lot too.

> But, we as a Native classroom assistants, we gave them a lot too. Like, we gave them our language and our culture. When they come from the south they have no knowledge of what the northern people do or how they live or their cultural background, so we shared that in return. So, whereas we knew that if we didn't go for our teachers' training to become qualified teachers we were just going to be a classroom assistant just to give ideas and knowledge that they needed. So, as I say, even though we have a strong cultural background and good communication skills in our own language, but we didn't qualify anywhere. It's not written and we're not recognized for that. So that's why we went on to teachers' college.

One result of early government attempts to help the people was the loss of family and community members who had been sent to the south for a variety of reasons. Many people were sent south for treatment for TB or other medical, social or educational forms of treatment. Because of the difficulty of communication, the remoteness of northern communities, the transience of southern people working in the north and so on, many of the people sent to the south simply disappeared and were lost in the bureaucratic tangle. Their families never heard from them again. At a later date the government attempted to rectify the harm that was done to the northern communities and to reconnect people with their families and their communities. Nora described one such instance as she explained the route which led her into her teaching journey.

> My interest in education started when I was working for Social Services. I was working with geriatrics, with juvenile offenders (before the young offender's act came in) and with a lot of people that had disabilities. And one of my jobs was to find the people that went south. We had a whole - quite a few people from the north that went south. And I found a few people. Most of them were in Red Deer.

One of the people that Nora managed to locate in Alberta was a young girl who had made good progress in her learning, despite having Cerebral Palsy. Nora was impressed with the progress that she had been able to make.

> And the one thing that interested me very much was a young girl and she had Cerebral Palsy. Now she went to - I'm not sure if it was in Red Deer , but she was at the special school. So my job was to meet her, bring her to her community and then make sure that she got back and went back to Edmonton so she could go back to school. And the things that this girl learned - because of her disability - is what interested me in education.

Nora was also concerned with the dependence on social assistance that she was noticing among young people, and wanted to do whatever she could to help young people stay in school and prepare for productive work as an alternative to welfare.

> And the other thing that interested me in education was when I worked in the community and I noticed that for a lot of young people the range of grades was up to grade nine, and after grade nine most of them didn't leave the community. They stayed in the community, and they ended up having children. I thought that had to change. I couldn't see all these young people, especially young women living on welfare and raising children. To me it just - it wasn't right. So that's where my interest in Special Needs came in. So, I quit working for Social Services and I went into Special Needs.

Tying Together the Narrative Threads

So it was, that, in a very short time, life for the Dogrib people changed dramatically. As small children, the Dogrib teachers had lived and travelled in small family groups, immersed in the natural landscape, much as Dogrib children had lived for centuries before them. They travelled freely across land and lakes, using boats in summer and dog-teams and sleds in the winter season. Their families' lives followed a seasonal rhythm of hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering plants and wood; and through these seasonal activities they provided food, clothing, shelter and medicine for their own needs and the needs of others in their small communal groups. Periodically they travelled to the larger centre of Fort Rae to sell their furs, to purchase supplies and to participate in their traditional feasts, rituals, dances and other celebrations. It was a festive time of gathering together in the larger group to renew friendships and share each other's stories.

Surrounded by the traditional Dogrib culture and their native language from birth, the teachers' learned the history, values, beliefs and practices of their culture in much the same way that Dogrib children before them had learned them. Close association with their elders, especially their own grandparents, helped them to learn to respect and trust the wisdom and knowledge of the elders, and to listen carefully to their instructions. Through living close to the natural environment and gradually absorbing the wealth of environmental knowledge of their grandparents and other elders, they developed close attachments to the land in which they lived. Their daily learning was practical, learned through the concrete process of working

together as families to provide their daily needs: watching first as others performed the required tasks and then attempting to do them for themselves.

Early in the teachers' lives, however, the impact of industrial development and southern government expansion into the north were beginning to have a profound effect on the Dogrib way of life. Students were being sent away from their families to attend residential schools where they were discouraged from using their Aboriginal language. They frequently returned home speaking more English than Dogrib and had to relearn the Dogrib language which they had lost. The close connections between children and elders were disrupted, at least for the period of time when the students were away at residential school. Traditional ways of teaching and learning were being eroded.

Schools were being developed in the larger Dogrib areas and southern teachers were arriving to teach in the schools. Dogrib speaking students were immersed in an English language education with all the resulting frustrations of being unable to express themselves adequately. With children in school, families were less free to follow the seasonal rhythms of their traditional way of life. A wage economy was replacing the earlier hunting and gathering economy, in turn disrupting the traditional sharing patterns which had sustained the people.

With great resilience the Dogrib people struggled to adjust to the rapid changes that were occurring. After completing their public school education the teachers' became involved in classrooms themselves in their roles as Dogrib language specialists, classroom assistants and special needs assistants. From those positions they launched out on the difficult, though rewarding, journey towards becoming certified teachers.

IV. Looking Back: Journey to Becoming Teachers

Beginning as Classroom Assistants

Nearly all of the Dogrib people who have entered the field of education began their journeys as classroom assistants or Dogrib language assistants. Training as a classroom assistant was available in Ft. Smith. Louisa described the program she experienced at Arctic College in Ft. Smith.

> At that time they were offering classroom assistant courses in Ft. Smith so I applied for it. I got accepted and that also really helped me a lot. Because you learn as a classroom assistant the different things that you can do with the kids. A lot of it was with art. A lot of it was with reading and writing and learning songs that would help the kids learn the language; and to be able to do gym with them: just those sorts of basic skills that you would require to be able to be a classroom assistant.

The Dogrib Division and Arctic College provided periodic training for the classroom assistants in a variety of ways. Louisa described some of the valuable training she experienced during her time of working as a classroom assistant.

> Every summer they sent us out to get different courses that we needed. I remember one year the school board sent us to Simon Fraser University to take a couple of courses. And I think that may have been one of the pushes that I really needed to take on a different position. When we were there we met the lady that wrote the book. *Teacher*: Sylvia Ashton Warner! She did one course with us. She didn't go to the University. She invited us to her apartment, and it was really exciting because I read her book and I had heard about her.
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> And a lot of it is just doing a lot of concrete things with the kids with whatever the culture that the kids come to school with, or traditions. You just build on it. She taught us how to play the sticks that the Maori people played, and we showed her our drum dance. And at the end of her course she had a little feast for us and we ended up with a drum dance. So we really, really did have fun out there and that's when it really made me think that as a teacher you can make it really exciting for the students by using a lot of the things that they have already.
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> It was the summer time, so there weren't that many students there at that time. But just the fact that you got to go to University and see what a University set-up was like has really helped me realize that this is the field I really would like to be able to work at. And I guess along the way I also had teachers that really believed that I had the potential to become a teacher and they told me and so I applied for T.E.P. [Teacher Education Program].

Learning as Student Teachers

The Field Based Program

Teacher education programs were gradually evolving in the Northwest Territories as government officials and educational administrators continually tried to improve the situation for their aboriginal students. A number of different forms of teacher education were attempted during the time that the present group of Dogrib teachers were involved in their teacher education programs.

One form that teacher education took for some of them was a program that was called a Field Based Program. It provided a home based program for Dogrib students who were not comfortable with the prospect of going away to Ft. Smith or elsewhere for long periods of time for their teacher education. Students were drawn from the ranks of classroom assistants within the schools in the communities. Every few months a course was offered at the largest Dogrib centre of Rae-Edzo. The instructor would deliver a course in a particular subject area for three weeks after which the teachers would return to their communities and do a practicum in that subject area. Rosalie described the way the Field Based Program worked.

> The instructor would teach us how to teach math. We would take that back to the community and practice that: do all the lesson planning, do long range planning, and do all the daily lesson plans, everything, just for that one subject; setting up classrooms, making materials, everything like that, dealing with classroom management, the whole thing. Each time as we came out to do a course, that was added to our responsibility, our role. So each time I came out more was added to my list.

It was difficult for student teachers with children to be constantly leaving home for periods of three weeks. Rosalie spoke of how family responsibilities made the travelling to another community quite difficult.

> But that lasted me for about a couple of courses because I was pregnant and my baby was due. My baby was born in January so I had to take some time off during that time because I was in Yellowknife waiting to deliver my baby. I think I waited like, six weeks because he was really, really late. And when I got home I had to make another decision of what I was going to do with my baby because it was time for me to travel to Rae again to do another course. And I couldn't leave my baby behind me. I just didn't know what to do. But the program didn't last very long. It lasted only about a year I think and the instructor had to leave, so they didn't find any replacement. And the

> following year I applied for the Teacher Education Program in Ft. Smith. So then I had to move myself and my kids to Ft. Smith.

In addition it was a relatively long drawn-out way of taking the required teacher education courses. Rita expressed some dissatisfaction with the slowness of the Field Based Program.

> It was a Field Based Program and it was courses here and then back to the classroom [to practice] and then about three weeks of a different course. But we weren't getting the kind of readiness we needed to use in the classroom. If we went for two full years we knew that we would get all the courses, complete all the courses in two years. Whereas the home based program was an off-and-on thing, and it would take longer - maybe four or more years if we didn't pass the courses.

The On-Campus Teacher Education Program

T.E.P (an on-campus Teacher Education Program at Arctic College's Tebacha Campus in Fort Smith) was one of the forms of teacher education experienced by the earliest Dogrib teacher graduates before Field Based Programs and Community Based Teacher Education Programs (C.T.E.P.s) became established. Since that time the College continues to provide on-campus Teacher Education Programs as an option for students who desire them or who do not have access to a C.T.E.P.

Mary Rose had been a classroom assistant for a number of years before deciding to continue her teacher education at Ft. Smith. That year was followed by a year of the Field Based Program in Rae-Edzo and later by a year in a Community Based Teacher Education Program. Her first teacher education experience in the T.E.P. at Ft. Smith was difficult for her but she felt that she had received a great deal of support from the College staff.

> Being a native teacher I found that the first time I was in Ft. Smith taking that program I had quite a low self-esteem of myself. I didn't have the confidence. And I remember the first year. All the student teachers were given a test to see what level we were, to see our academic level. I remember all my friends had to take upgrading in the mornings. And in the afternoon they would come and join us for the teachers' program. I keep bugging [the supervisor] Alice Bolduc that I wanted to take upgrading you know, because I wanted to be with my friends. And Alice used to put me aside and really talk to me.
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> Until this day you know, I think she's one of the persons that really, really made me build up my self-esteem, confidence, and not to give up. Because at times I used to try, - want to give up and quit the program and come back. But she used to put

> me aside and she used to talk to me, "You know, Mary Ann, you have the potential to be a good teacher. It's just that you don't believe in yourself." And that year she used to tell me, "You don't have any reason to get into that upgrading program. Because your level was high and you don't need to get into that program." And I was scared too, because I didn't know the other girls. But then it seemed like every day she was there to support me, support me all the time, eh. I don't know. Good thing we had counsellors there to really support us.

Anna was one of those students who chose to take a year in T.E.P. at Ft. Smith because there was no C.T.E.P. being offered in her community when she wanted to continue with her teacher education. So she talked to her parents and decided to go back into teacher education at Arctic College in Ft. Smith. It was a hard decision for her. It was her first time away from her family. It was her first time to be alone as a single parent. She was very nervous. But she talked to others who had been there. They told her it would be a hardship. But they said, "You can do it. Don't give up. It's worth it."

She was happy when she was accepted into T.E.P. by Arctic College. It was the first time she had ever been to Ft. Smith. She was there by herself with her six year old daughter. It was tough finding where to go and getting used to where things were. Her daughter started grade one there. She had to look for a sitter and pay extra for the sitter when she had evening courses or meetings. Finances were tight. But she made some friends and the first year went well.

Encountering Difficulties

On the journey to becoming teachers each of the women encountered challenges and difficulties which had to be overcome. Rita took her children with her when she began her teacher education program in Ft. Smith. She enjoyed her studies at Arctic College but found that the experience of leaving their home community was very hard on her children.

> It was hard because I brought my younger kids, and then I had about three other students that wanted to go to school in Ft. Smith, so I took them with me and my older kids were in Sir John [in Yellowknife] at that time. Then my husband was out trapping, so we were kind of all separated. But I found that for myself, with the courses that I was doing, I was really into working and doing my work . But it was hard on the kids. They wouldn't adapt to the place or the people. Even the schooling was hard for them. And no matter how much I wanted them to get used to the school and the people there and the town there it was hard. Especially for the older ones 'cuz they needed to be among their

> own people and if you move with all your family it's a big change and it's good for the adults, like for me, but it wasn't good for the kids. 'Cuz they didn't have the kind of facilities that they wanted to be part of and I found that there were transportation problems. Like, whenever the kids were sick I found that was hard, especially when that was late at night. And then we had financial problems even though we had student finance. So, too difficult to be away with a big family.

Anna also found her time at Ft. Smith difficult. At the end of the second year she had one last course to finish. But the second year was harder for her than the first. Earlier in her life, like many of the Dogrib young people, she had developed a drinking problem. Under the stress of studying and being away from home for so long she began to feel upset and angry and she began drinking again. Things became worse for her after Christmas. Her daughter's asthma got worse and she sent her daughter back home to her Mom who knew how to look after her asthma.

Although her parents knew about Anna's drinking she didn't admit it openly to them. She left her daughter at home with her Mom and went back to Ft. Smith. She knew some friends there but she was not close enough to them to talk about her problems with them. She felt alone and began drinking more. When exam time came she failed the last course she needed. She was upset and angry and discouraged. She told her friends, "Forget it. It's no use. I can't do it. I failed. I'm not taking it anymore." She went home and got a job. Later on she was able to complete her last course at the next Community Based Teacher Education Program which was offered in Rae.

Rosalie too described some of the difficulties encountered during her year of attendance at Arctic College in Ft. Smith.

> When I went to Ft. Smith that was too much for me. Because my grade level was low, eh. So that was really difficult for me. Because my grade level was low I had to do twice as much work; trying to make sure I'm getting my marks and trying to do all my school work and all that. Many, many times I stayed up really, really late, like four o'clock in the morning, trying to read. 'Cuz as I was reading my materials I had to go over the materials that I was reading and, you know, highlight words I didn't understand and go through dictionaries. And so it took me a long time to do my readings and stuff like that. And also while I was there my husband wasn't with me so I had to look after the kids, dropping them off in the morning at day care and picking them up after school, and going home, cooking, cleaning and - it was Superlady I guess.

> So that was a really, really heavy, heavy load. So when I came back here to do my Community Based Teacher Education Program that was kind of a relief. Because I can always just push it aside and say to my husband, "You look after these things. I have to do this right now."

Community Based Teacher Education Programs (C.T.E.P.)

Community Based Teacher Education Programs were instituted in the Northwest Territories to attempt to address the problems Aboriginal student teachers had encountered in the T.E.P., associated with having to go so far away from their home communities. The initial Dogrib Kw'atindee Bino Community Teacher Education Program held in Rae-Edzo in 1990 to 1992 was an innovative program which was designed to allow the student teachers to have a great deal of practical experience within the classroom. Several of the Dogrib teachers presently working in the Dogrib Division graduated from that first program. Rita described what the initial Kw'atindee Bino Community Based Teacher Education Program was like for her.

> Being in the C.T.E.P. program was - it was like training on the job, where I was in the classroom every day. And then I was being trained by an instructor, so the instructor was there. And every day was an observation time for us. Because for some of us it helped us, depending on what instructor we had. For example, every day after school, or the end of the week, our instructor would tell us where we were weak, or how we should have been giving our lessons, or demonstrating. Especially being the role model, he gave us a lot of ideas and information that we were lacking. And especially preparing the materials for each subject. And I found out with a good instructor you really can improve a lot. I didn't find it stressful. No stress at all. It was good. It was a happy atmosphere for me. And when you really want to do something or become something you feel good about it. And that's how I felt.

Nora also expressed her enjoyment of learning "on the job" within the Kw'atindee Bino C.T.E.P.

> I took the C.T.E.P. program and it was classroom oriented. That's how we taught, which was very good. Because it taught you classroom management. If you were teaching a lesson and you bombed it, you had to switch right away. And we had four instructors that worked with us and four different types of learning styles which was good. So we were able to pool what was good for us from those four instructors.
>
> We had *pods* (we called them) from kindergarten to grade three. And in each *pod* there were three C.T.E.P. students and one instructor. But the instructors would teach us all different methodology things. You know, if it was Language Arts or Art or Math or Video or - (what do you call that?) - photography (which I failed). But all these different subjects! So each of the instructors would come and give us instruction, or a

course on different things. And within the pod we broke up all the subject areas. And for the first third of the semester we would teach certain subjects. So by the end of the year we all had a chance to teach at least all the subjects once. And whenever (whatever subject we were teaching) we were in the classroom, the other two would go and take whatever course was being offered. And that's how we did it. And I think that was really, really, really good.

For me personally that was one of the best things. I don't think I could have gone to University. Maybe I would have learned all the things that teachers need to learn and that. But then come back and not have that classroom management there, not knowing the kids! I think that's more scary than anything. So for me personally I think that was the best way for me to learn. You couldn't go running out of the classroom. You had to stay there and settle it. And try to work things out.

But it was a lot of fun too. We had a lot of fun in the classroom. Little things the kids did were funny and some things that they didn't do which were funny, but we always had to laugh. We weren't laughing at the kids particularly but we were laughing at the situation that we found ourselves caught in. And sometimes we didn't know what to do with it so we would laugh. It was so funny. I mean, you know, we have to turn away and turn back with a straight face and try to act like, you know, what they're doing is really wrong. I can remember one little girl, she was so naughty, really naughty. I used to tell her, "Sit quietly for three minutes, you know. That's a long time for her to sit quietly. And "Be quiet. Put your head down to help you. Listen. Close your eyes," because we're doing hearing skills here. Not even thirty seconds later she said, "I tried really hard you know. I can't do it." Little things like that. It was so funny.

The second year the pods were smaller. The first year I think we had one, two, three - we had four pods. The second year we only had three because some graduated. They did their last year of the T.E.P. program in the C.T.E.P. program that was being offered in Rae. So the pods got smaller. And then, those other four who graduated, we were able to use them as resource people to share ideas with us. So in that sense that bonding was still there, especially when it came to teaching the Dene languages. Just anything, doing up report cards, teaching a good lesson plan in Language Arts, or materials or whatever. So all those things were there for us and we knew who to go for what, and I think that made it important for us. I think the bonding is still there. I still go see the others and I have the new teachers come and see me, you know. They ask for ideas or information or "How can we teach this? How can we do that?" I think it's still there.

Since that original program there has been another C.T.E.P. held in Rae-Edzo between 1993 and 1996. Anna was admitted to the later C.T.E.P. in Rae-Edzo for the one course she needed to complete her diploma. She too found the Community Based Teacher Education Program was able to meet her needs. The night before her final exam she stayed awake worrying about the exam. She was praying she would pass the test. After waiting nervously all week to know the results her instructor finally told her she had passed. She was elated.

I said, "Did I really pass? Do you really mean it?" I was so happy I passed and I knew I was going to graduate. I just wanted to dance and hug her. On graduation day my mom and dad were really, really happy. My dad said, "I won't forget the face you have on today." My tears just started to come down. I'm so happy.

But I was really, really nervous on my graduation day. It's not part of my culture to send out invitations. I just asked my mom and dad to come and my brothers and sisters. And I said to the rest of my relatives, if they wanted to be there they could come. I didn't know who would come. When it was graduation I just couldn't believe how many people came. All my relatives came. My sister graduated in the same class. My mom and dad took us out to a big dinner. After dinner my Mom said, "It's your big day. You can stay out and celebrate if you want to." But I was too tired. I just wanted to be at home. I just wanted to relax. I didn't want to celebrate with alcohol.

Another C.T.E.P. was begun in Wha Ti in 1993 and completed in Yellowknife in 1996. Several other teachers currently teaching in the Dogrib Division graduated from those two later programs. As a new form of teacher education the administration of the C.T.E.P.s has required an ongoing process of problem solving and readjustments. Lena spoke of some of the particular difficulties students encountered in the C.T.E.P. begun in Wha Ti in 1993 and emphasized the value of the mutual support the students gave to one another.

The first year while we were there we were being thrown in the class without any experience and we didn't know what we were doing. But then, as the interns, we helped one another and the first year we got through. And then the second year was only for half a year that we'd be teaching the class and then we were in the course again. And it was good learning things and getting to know the students and that. It was good. And the last year that I was there our instructor came in but he didn't stay long and he left so we were there with no instructor. And then we'd been moved to Yellowknife for our last year of the course.

We did practice teaching going to the school in Yellowknife. It was in the school. After we observed them then they let us teach. See how. They were watching us and all that. But it's kind of frightening, like when you're being watched and all that, but we got through that. The first year when we were doing that in Yellowknife with the Y.T.E.P. (Yellowknife Teacher Education Program) students they were nervous, you know. I can tell. I remember one girl was just shaking when she was doing her reading. I said, "It's been like that. I know how it is 'cuz we've been through it. That's how it is the first time but later on you'll get used to it."

The students who dropped out, they have pressures on themselves, that they have family problems and all that and they just couldn't keep up with their work too. So it's kind of, you know, hard on them, I think. The Arctic College, they had a counsellor that needed to be talking to the students. They did have some help too, but I guess it wasn't helping them.

The Teachers' Evaluation of Their Teacher Education Programs

In spite of some of the difficulties the teachers experienced during their teacher education programs they were strongly committed to their goal of becoming fully qualified teachers and for the most part they spoke positively of all the various forms of their teacher education experiences.

In addition to being a classroom assistant, Mary Rose had experienced three different forms of teacher education in her journey to becoming a teacher. She compared how the different programs benefited her and their usefulness to her in her first years of teaching.

> I was a Classroom Assistant until (I'll say) about 1987. And after 1987 I decided, since I enjoyed working with the young children, to get into teaching myself. So the following year I went to Ft. Smith for a year. I took a teachers' program there. And then a year after that there was a Field Based Program in Edzo. So I took that and then my last year was in the C.T.E.P. program. And I find that all these three programs, three different programs that I've been in, taught me quite a bit. Not only that. In the past, in the early seventies and eighties, they used to have Classroom Assistant courses in the summer, every summer. They don't have it now. And we used to go out there every summer to get into this program. And sometime it lasted four to six weeks. I think all these courses and skills that we been taught, and plus all the different programs that I've been into, have helped me a lot in my teaching now. But a large portion of the skills that I've been taught was in Ft. Smith teachers' program.

> When I took my practicum [at Ft. Smith] it was just wonderful. I had a teacher that was a really, really understanding teacher. He was a grade three teacher and he had about thirty years teaching experience. And I learned a lot from him. I learned quite a lot from him. And we were really closely supervised at all time when we were doing our practicum there, with video-tapes and every, every, every little thing, you know. And even though we're reading a story to the students our instructor was right there if the kids were getting restless, and to make sure we're using the six levels of questions and all that. It was really good. I found it tough, but I learned a lot from there, you know.

Rita told of her appreciation of the English language upgrading she received at teachers' college.

> Because our language (our first language) is our Native language and a lot of us struggle with the English language we took upgrading over there too. It helped us a lot. I thought this was the kind of upgrading that we needed. So I was happy with that and I really enjoyed taking my courses. And in teachers' college too it gave us a lot of support in where our weakness was and how we should work on our weakness to improve our skills. And it helped us a lot.

So, being in Ft. Smith, the courses that I took, I really enjoyed doing all the courses. But the problem with that, - I wasn't home. It wasn't my town. But for me it wasn't so bad but it was hard on my kids which made me really unhappy for them. Because if you can't - if your children are not happy where you are there's something missing.

I was there for the first year , the first whole year. Then when they were going to be offering the C.T.E.P. program I found out about that so I completed the first year and then I came back in the summer. I entered the C.T.E.P. program in Edzo instead of going back to Ft. Smith with my second year. And when we came back it was different because getting in to C.T.E.P. program I had my kids. They all came to school. And my girls were not far away from us in Yellowknife. So there we didn't have a communication problem, so it was good.

Rosalie acknowledged the value of her practical experience in the classroom for her development as a teacher as well as the "paper work" learnings gained from her experiences at Ft. Smith.

But I found all the courses that I took really helped a lot. First of all I started off as a Special Needs Assistant so I learned how to work with kids. And then when I went in and did my Field Based Program I learned a little bit about everything from then on. So when I got into T.E.P. [at Ft. Smith], the T.E.P. program just taught me how to teach all the different subjects like Health, Social Studies more advanced because we had to learn how to teach from kindergarten to grade nine students. So I did that. And a lot of paper work!

Now when I came back here, because I was doing my practicum all through the year [in the C.T.E.P.] with a lot of practising (you make little bit of mistake and you have to fix it again and keep doing your practicum to improve) so that's what helped improve me a lot as a teacher. So I wouldn't put either, you know, the Arctic College program or the C.T.E.P. program down at all. Because I learned some good skills from both of them. In Ft. Smith I learned a lot of good paper work type of stuff, reading and writing and all that skills that I need as a teacher, eh. And also, over here I learned a lot about dealing with students and handling behaviour problems and dealing with students that have problems. Basic counselling skills is what I'm talking about. That really helped me a lot to become a good teacher I think.

I never thought of it as a lot of work. Because for me it was a natural process. You know what I mean? I accept my responsibility as a parent and also I've always accepted my responsibility as teacher. And I've always known that getting anything done isn't easy. Maybe I was going through hard times. I don't know. But I just accepted it as it is. And I just did the best I can. A lot of organizing my home, organizing my kids and also just having a certain kind of routine and scheduling stuff. And so, I was able to make time for just about everything I did. Make a little bit of time for my kids, a little bit of time for my husband, make time for my school work and stuff like that. So I didn't really see it as draining or too much work.

And I also had really good support from my husband. He was there with me a hundred percent. And some days I would just feel so tired. He would push me and say, "Come on. You gotta do this. You gotta do this." He was there to support me and also to encourage me. And also whenever my parents were there they were always there to give me some support as well. So that was really good. I think I had a lot of good

support. But also because I really wanted this. You know, I really wanted this. This is what I've always wanted to do was to become a teacher. So it wasn't an extra load or anything like that. I think I really enjoyed learning - studying.

And my favourite subject was going over Psychology. I just love that. And also in Psychology we learned how little kids learn from an infant and all that. Oh, I just loved it. At the time I had my baby. He was just a couple of months old so I did a lot of research on him. It was a lot of fun. Watching him grow and - I think that made me become a lot better parent , understanding that part, you know, - psychology, you know So it was really, really good. Actually I took that course twice. The first time I took it my marks were fairly low, eh. I just passed - barely passed, but when I went to Ft. Smith I took it again. I really enjoyed it. It was really good.

One thing though, when I went to Arctic College, they gave us a lot of do this, do this, do that. They gave us a lot of good ideas, you know, really good ideas. But a lot of the good ideas that they gave us to teachers are very impossible. [*laughter*] I'm not too sure if I can pinpoint anything. I don't remember. But I know a lot of time when I came to classes and the ideas that I was given by these T.E.P. people, instructors, I'd try and try and try. I'd just get so frustrated, you know?

When we got into this holistic teaching and all that , they introduce a lot of using centres and all that, you know. Like when you're teaching math they ask you to use all these different kind of centres in the classroom. And it's just impossible as a teacher. Because you don't have time to change your whole centres every week. I tried. I just got frustrated so I gave it up. But I learned not to just get into things like that and develop slower, - slowly develop and towards the end it's OK. I don't know.

Many of the teachers were fluent in Dogrib but struggled with the speaking, reading and writing of English. They often needed to combine academic upgrading along with the courses required for teacher education. Mary Ann described the tiredness which often accompanies teacher education for mature women with families.

Then in elementary school I worked with the teacher for - for a whole year and the whole year I'd be working in the class. In the evenings I would go to upgrading, seven o'clock in the evening until nine. We were just drained. Then we've got our own family to think about. I was just drained by the end of the course. For myself I still need to upgrade myself. I'm not very good in math, or in my English. English is my second language, so I teach better in Dogrib. So that's what I wanted to do. Go back to school. But it's hard with a big family.

Tying Together the Narrative Threads

In past years a variety of forms of teacher education have been available for Aboriginal student teachers in the Northwest Territories. The Federal Government, with the assistance of the University of Alberta, initiated teacher education in the territory in a

one-year experimental program in Yellowknife in 1968. In 1970, under the direction of a new Northwest Territories Department of Education, the course was lengthened to two years and was moved from Yellowknife to Ft. Smith. One semester of the second year was taken at the University of Alberta, with the second semester consisting of practice teaching in schools in the territory. Affiliation with the University of Alberta was discontinued in 1973. Later an affiliation was established with the University of Saskatchewan which continues to the present (Macpherson, 1991, p.200).

Various ways of delivering teacher education programs were attempted in the eastern and western portions of the Northwest Territories but none seemed completely satisfactory. The field-based program which the Dogrib teachers described was developed in 1988 in an attempt to increase the numbers of certified Dene teachers in the western Arctic. Classroom assistants were enrolled in the program but, as the Dogrib teachers have shown, hardships were created by students having to leave their home communities so frequently. The field based program was ended in 1989.

However, the need for improved teacher education programs for Dene student teachers was great. A Steering Committee was appointed to develop a new model of teacher education for northern communities. During this time the five Dogrib communities had requested greater local control of their school system, and they had been granted status as The Dogrib Divisional Board of Education in 1989. "There had been a tradition of local control in the area as Rae-Edzo was the first native community in Canada (1969) to receive control of their school from the federal government" (Martin, 1990, p5). The Dogrib Division was chosen as the site to pilot the new model of teacher education developed by the government appointed Steering Committee. Thus the Kw'atindee Bino Community Teacher Education Program became established as an alternate model of northern teacher education (Martin, 1990, pp.1-6). For a variety of reasons the original model of Community Based Teacher Education which was piloted in Rae Edzo in 1990

has been changed in later C.T.E.P's. The newer programs have tended to be less classroom centred and to be delivered in a more traditional lecture format.

The community based programs were developed in an attempt to provide more favourable situations for Aboriginal students who find it difficult to be away from their home communities for long periods of time. Since many of the Aboriginal people entering teacher education are mature students with families of their own, the opportunity to study in their home community enhances their chances of completing their program without too much family disruption. In spite of the difficulties and hardships associated with some of their teacher education programs the Dogrib teachers are extremely supportive of each form of teacher education that they received. They have spoken of the contributions to their learning made by each form of teacher education. However, as their stories reveal, their greatest enthusiasm seems to be associated with the practical classroom-based teacher education which they received in the first Kw'atindee Bino Teacher Education Program.

V. Living Today: Working As Certified Teachers

Initial Experiences of Teaching

Most of the teachers had been classroom assistants or Dogrib language assistants for a number of years before going on to become certified teachers themselves. That previous experience helped them settle fairly comfortably into teaching in a classroom of their own. However, some were aware of the gaps in their learning and were nervous about having the full responsibility of a class of their own. Mary Rose felt there were some missing parts in her teacher education that sometimes made the first year of teaching difficult.

> The first six months or so was kind of a struggle for me. I noticed I was lacking this and that and I wished I was back in school at that time because of it, eh. But then during the years I was a teacher there was an opportunity to get into computer courses, and language courses with Angela Ward; and a lot of support from teachers that had a lot of experience and we learned a lot from them. And today I feel more confident of being a Native teacher.

Graduating recently, Lena felt confident in her ability to do her long range planning and daily lesson plans. She settled into teaching comfortably.

> When I first got into my class I had all my unit plans done, lesson plans and all that, and yearly plan. Well, we'd been taught that a lot when we were taking our course so I knew where to go. But in Health too and Social Studies, Science and all those we knew what to do. So it's not like I didn't know what I'm doing, but it's just like I felt at home when I got back here, and I knew what to do. The first time they showed me where all the materials and things were then I knew where to start from. It was good.

Anna described how nervous she had been as she took over full responsibility for her own classroom. She felt that the parents were often critical of C.T.E.P. graduates and might not accept her as a teacher.

> When school started I was really, really nervous, really scared. I practice taught in classes before, but I didn't teach in a multi-grade before. They should give a beginning teacher a single-grade class, so they could learn how to do that first. But when I started I was really, really scared; scared of what the principal and the other teachers would think about me.
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> I went to school a whole week before school started, because I wanted to set up my class and get things ready. Before school started, that night I didn't sleep all night. I just stayed awake the whole night, just tossing and turning. I was so scared. I thought the parents wouldn't know I was a real teacher and - like, they might not want to bring

their kids to my class. I was really worried about what they'd say having a C.T.E.P. for teacher. I was just - I was very, very nervous. But I talked with my friend and she said the first year is like that for everybody. She said the second year would be easier.

The first day of school I was so surprised. All the children came and the parents they were really happy to see me. That first month, when the parents dropped by I'd just sit with them and explain what I'm doing in my class, just talk to them about their kids, 'cuz I want them to be comfortable to come in school. The students were so surprised that I spoke Dogrib. They asked me where I was from. When I told them I live in their community they asked how come they never see me. I told them I've been away at school a lot. They wanted to hear my story. After they listened to my story they told me their stories.

Although she was nervous at first when she began to teach, Anna would talk to other teachers. They reassured her that it was her first year, and that it is always like that when you are beginning to teach. They were willing to help and they would often chat for ten minutes or have coffee together. After a month she felt very comfortable at school.

Planning was really, really hard at first 'cuz I never did multi-grade plans before. At first I tried to make plans for each grade I was teaching, like from the curriculum guides, but it was very hard. I worked on it until ten or eleven every night. And I got really, really tired. So I phoned around and I talked to some of those other multi-grade teachers. I asked them how they did it. They told me to pick out parts from each grade and put them together. And in the Science, Social Studies and the Health they said I should rotate the years in the curriculum. That way it got easier. In math I work on the same skills for each grade level. I just pick chapters from their grade level text that are based on that skill I'm teaching.

Rosalie spoke of her lack of confidence in herself as a beginning teacher and the changes she perceives in herself after several years of teaching experience.

When I first started teaching the first year I was really, really nervous. And also, because academically I was very, very low when I started as a classroom assistant so I would get very nervous about how I was teaching or what I said. 'Cuz I had to be careful. I had to learn to be careful with the kind of language I used in the classroom. So I was really, really nervous about that. But as of today, no. I'm very confident. I feel like I'm a lot stronger person, much more mature. Very confident in myself. And I've just developed a lot of strength.

When I first became a teacher - I'll compare, OK? When I first started working in the classroom I didn't speak my mind. I was really a Dogrib traditional young woman. I did not speak my mind 'cuz I was raised not to do that. And I was very quiet. I didn't talk. And like, right now with my husband we've been together for fifteen years. He noticed that I've grown a lot just within the fifteen years. Because when I first started (this is really unbelievable) my husband and I would sit together, and watch TV. We'd just sit together and I wouldn't say anything. And he would just ask me simple questions like, "How are you doing?" and I would just get nervous and say, "I don't know." Like, I had to think of what I should say. And I had to think of saying something that makes him happy, because I was afraid to anger him too, eh, or hurt his feelings. So I really had to hesitate to answer questions or find something to say. But

now it's not like that anymore. I speak my mind. And I was very, very careful. I was very quiet as well, and very immature. Just like a little girl. But now I am a completely different person from that time.

Nora spoke of her nervousness at starting out teaching the Dogrib language.

I graduated and they asked me to work in the high school to be the language specialist for Dogrib in the high school. And nobody else wanted to do it and I thought - I was scared. I was too scared because Dogrib is my third language. And I wasn't really confident in myself to teach it orally. But I could teach them to read and write it. I knew I could do that. So I accepted and I took it on as a challenge and I did it for four years. And most of the kids that came out my program, I would say they're very good readers and writers. So I was very pleased.

Another thing I did in the school was I took on the student counsellor position which was half time also, which I enjoyed because that's part of my background. And to be truthful, I never ever dreamed of myself being a teacher. Never. That was something that I never even thought about . So I'm here after five years.

Feeling Supported As a Beginning Teacher

Rita described the good support she had from the community, parents and staff during her first years of teaching as a culture and language teacher and her early discovery of the students' difficulties either with the Dogrib or the English language.

I had a lot of support, especially from the community and the parents and the staff. So a lot of support and help came from other resources. So my whole year was good. I felt good about it. Then, when I took the bi-lingual grade one and two class, at first I wasn't really sure if the kids were learning because some of them came in with English as their first language and some of them were stronger in one language and weaker in the other one. Some were weak in both.

So when I thought about it, whatever I was taught in bi-lingual program during my C.T.E.P. training, I used all those activities and a lot of listening skills and I used all those kind of activities. Then things started to flow better after. And after doing grade two and three bi-lingual too I found that a lot of children needed a lot of communication - oral communication in Dogrib. So I tried to do as much demonstration in Dogrib as I can. So I felt good about it because the kids were learning. They were learning to speak, and reading and writing in Dogrib as well as in English.

Stories of Teaching and It's Rewards

Good Times in Teaching

The teachers' stories of their teaching experiences are many and varied. Each of them had memories of students or groups of students that they had worked with in

particular ways. And they told of the rewards they had experienced within their teaching.

Lena spoke of some of her experiences.

> We suggested that we start an "Early Bird Program" because we wanted the kids to be on time for school. So for every Friday we have our early breakfast. The kids come in before nine. They have to have three early attendance check marks to be an Early Bird so that's what we're doing, encouraging the kids to come in to school. And the parents they know, so they send their kids off to school early too. We do it for a month each. We do a rotation and so one teacher's cooking and then after that it's another. We all switch. We do bacon and eggs in the morning some time. We do some baking, and then sometimes for lunch we would have cowboy stew, and caribou stew too with bannock. And we do cranberry pancakes and things like that for breakfast too. Whatever we do they all like it.
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> In summer time we go berry picking but we have to be very careful because there's bears around at that time too. So we really have to watch. There's a janitor working with us at the school so he watches with us. He comes along when we go berry picking.
>
> And sometimes we take the kids out on the boat. Like, I have my young students go out only once in a while. They don't often get to go out because you know, they're small. That's what they always say. But we got them out to the camp where the school cabin is. We took them out once. It was an exciting day. They were talking about it and writing it down in their journal. We go by boat. We only go there in the summer 'cuz it's too far by skidoo. We don't sleep over, but I don't know how long it takes. Maybe a two hour or three hour drive there. It's quite a long way to the school cabin.

Nora spoke of the satisfaction of working successfully with difficult students.

> I had another student who was - oh, he was off the wall. He couldn't stay in the classroom or be on task more than fifteen minutes. We had the kids for a whole hour. So I didn't know what to do. So I thought, "Oh my goodness!" Somebody told me, "Oh, poor you!" and I thought, "No, I'm not going to get scared. I'm going to accept him as a challenge - or even this whole class." And I didn't know what to do so I made a deal (this was in Edzo) with Gloria, the cook at the school, that he would do fifteen minutes of class time and I would send him to Gloria for forty-five minutes. 'Cuz I can't have him wandering the halls, bothering other kids, or poking them you know. So he was doing something physical. And by the end of the year I had this kid working forty-five minutes in class and fifteen minutes in the kitchen. So I was just ecstatic about that.
>
> I had another student who was just struggling in English, really struggling. But I took him for the Dogrib language program and I taught him how to read and write. And I remember at the end of the semester. He passed you know. He passed with sixty-one percent, (which is not a great mark) but he worked so hard for that mark. I'm telling you, I cried you know. I told him what his mark was and showed the test papers and all that and the smile on his face, you know. When I worked at Social Services I never really saw those smiles from kids. But being in the classroom and you see these kids succeeding, or they're learning, they just learn something new - that smile on their face is worth a million dollars. It's just - that's one of the greatest things I felt as being a teacher in the classroom.

Rosalie smiled and spoke with evident pleasure as she told of her experience of teaching a kindergarten class.

> Last year, when I was teaching kindergarten, in just about everything I did I had to use concrete materials. Bring in a lot of stuff. And it seemed to work wonders, you know. Let's see. When I was teaching the alphabet, alphabet recognition, the letter sounds and all that, I had to bring in a lot of concrete materials that begin with the letter B, you know. Like: *bottle, baby, big* and a whole bunch of materials like that. And I would let them play with it and touch it. And I also have a lot of centres in my room. And one area that the kids like the best is the water centre. So in the water centre I would take out stuff like bubbles and a little bit of paint, you know, blue paint or black paint and mix it with water. I would say, "Look! The water color's changing. What color is it? It's blue." And then I would add bubbles to it. I said, "Look at those blue bubbles. My goodness! What letter does this begins with?" Or, "What sound does it begin with?" So I did a lot of stuff like that for them to see.
>
> And we also did a lot of eating. [*laughter*] So I would get the kids to make bannock and when we were mixing the bannock, the ingredients, I let them play with the dough and, you know, make the letter B with the bannock dough, and just cook it like that and let them eat their letter B. We had a lot of fun doing stuff like that. And most of my students caught on - learned very well, I think, in my kindergarten. Just a few problem behaviour students, - but over all most of them came out of kindergarten at the end of the year very strong.

Her interest in Psychology is reflected in her stories of memorable teaching experiences.

> We had a really good instructor. I would say he was one of the best instructors. And he taught us that when you're dealing with students in the classroom we need to help students to learn how to deal with their problems and also learn how to cope with the problems. And also teach them to express themselves. And when he said that I understood exactly what he was talking about just from the situation I've come from you know.
>
> So as a teacher, even as a primary teacher, I do that a lot. Like every morning when we get in the class everybody will sit in the circle and we start off with an opening prayer and we also do a sharing circle. In a sharing circle students will have a chance to talk about their feelings, the kind of day they had, and the kind of evening they had. And whenever they have anything they want to talk about there is a chance for them to express that. I want them to get things off their mind, things off their chest. So that for the rest of the day they will feel good and they won't have to worry about their problems and will be able to concentrate on their learning. And I always believe in that. So I practice that a lot with my students in primary.
>
> And I also learned that itself (the sharing circle) also teaches students to learn how to express themselves. Because a lot of time being raised within our Native homes we are told not to feel, not to cry, not to get mad, don't have any feelings! That's how we've been taught. So it really does help students to talk about their feelings and also to bring up their own opinion, you know. So that's what I've done. And I think that's one of the reasons why my classroom atmosphere's always really comfortable, cozy - the way

students talk to each other, the way they handle each other. Their communication has always been very good in my classes.

And I've dealt with many, many extremely difficult behaviour problem students and in the end I was always able to smile about it and say, "Look. Wow! All that anger that I had to go through with this student. All that frustration and hurt and all that. And look at this kid! He's able to sit and do this work for half an hour." So at the end of the year whenever I'm able to look at this kid and think, "Yeah, I've done a good job," that's something to feel good about. And - I don't know - I just love it. I just love it. You know? Ah, that's me. That's who I am. I like to help people and make sure my students feel safe and secure and that they know that there's somebody who cares for them.

And (this was really neat!) last year when I had my kindergarten we did a lot of group huggings. We did a lot of good huggings. And when we were in sharing circle some days I would say, "Oh, I need a hug this morning. I feel kind of sad. I really need a hug." And they would just come to me and they would all give to me this great big group hug. But I was doing that to show them that's it's OK to ask for those things, you know.

And one day this one little girl came here and she was very late at coming to school. When she came she didn't want to come inside. She was kind of standing way over there by the door. So I said, "Come on in. Come and sit with us." And she just needed someone to, you know, give her a hug and give her a little encouragement. I said, "Come on. Come and sit with me. Come and sit right here with me." So she came in and sat and since we were doing a group sharing everybody was doing their sharing. She was the last person. So I said, "We're doing a sharing circle. Do you want to share anything? Do you want to say anything to the group?" And she just stood up and said, "Rosalie, I really need a hug. I feel really sad." Everybody just went and gave her a big hug. It was really, really neat.

Later Rosalie transferred to the junior and senior high school, and began to do counselling as well as part time teaching.

Even here in the high school I'm dealing with these teenagers. Some of them are way taller than I, but I still practice a lot of that. I don't do what I used to do with my primary students, just because of the age differences. But I do give a lot of encouragement and a lot of pats on the back. And I feel very close to the high school students. What they really need - like for me I think what they really need is a motherly type of person in the school and that's what I am. Whenever I'm in my office this office is just constantly busy, busy, busy, busy. Whenever they need someone to talk to I'm there for them, now whether it's in this office or out in the hall or anywhere. In the evening they will phone my house if they need someone to talk to. And I also make that available for them, you know. I always feel that it's very important for them.

Those are some of those happy memories that I have. Just before Christmas I went in to elementary school and I went in to the grade one class who were my students in kindergarten last year. As soon as I walked in they said, "Rosalie, we missed you" and they all came running and gave me a big hug. They just hung on to me for so long, you know. It was so neat. I felt kind of sad. Because it's good to be with them. I really enjoy being with those little kids. That was really neat.

Going On Field Trips

The teachers take the students out on the land whenever possible to help them maintain the close connection with the land which is so highly valued by the Dogrib people. Nora described one of the trips she took with her students.

> I can remember taking the kids out on a land trip. And nobody wanted to take this group of kids. 'Cuz they were really, really naughty - so hard to control. And I remember two boys who got into trouble so they were suspended from school. Anyways, I took the home room teacher with me and we went out to the camp at Stag River. I took a mixture of both girls and boys 'cuz I thought they need to learn to respect each other.
>
> But anyway, these two boys drove their bikes from Rae all the way out there. And they said, (I felt really badly) "Nora, we are never going to get to go on trips unless it's with you, because of our behaviour. Nobody - we'll never be rewarded. We'll never get to go on trips." I felt really badly for those kids and so I thought, "When I go back I'm going to have to start doing little rewards." But even though I had some teachers say about those kids, "They shouldn't have gone on that trip" I still took them all.
>
> And it was really funny at night. I was trying to get them to go to bed. This was in May - the end of May. The sun was up, you know. It doesn't go down. I told them I was so tired. They were so - like, everywhere and to get them to settle down was unreal. So I said, "Let's listen to how many different sounds we can hear, you know, and count them on your fingers and see." 'Cuz there's frogs and different birds and all these things. And then this one kid (that time I was talking about - that was off the wall) said, "Nora, I know why you're doing that. You want us to go to sleep." [*chuckle*] I didn't say anything but he told me, "I heard a hundred sounds," you know, but he was counting the same sounds over and over again. That was funny. I'll never forget that.
>
> We spent the whole day there and all the next day and then we left. When we got back to the classroom I asked the home room teacher to do a write-up. He said, "Well, it was your trip. You do the write-up." I said, "But I *expected* this behaviour from the kids." 'Cuz they switched. Totally different kids out on the land. And I wanted him to do the write-up 'cuz he couldn't believe these were the same kids in his home room.
>
> And what that teacher wrote about the kids was, - you know, he said he totally saw a different side of these kids and how everybody just interacted and helped each other and looked after each other. Nobody gave each other a hard time. There was no - there was teasing, but not severe teasing like they would do in the classroom. There was no fighting. There was no swearing. Those are things that really stand out in my mind. 'Cuz a lot of those kids, people just wouldn't take them.

For Mary Ann the cultural activities that she has been able to do with her students are the ones she remembers most vividly. Being on the land and teaching the students

about the natural environment are very important to her and she finds those kinds of activities especially enjoyable and rewarding.

> In the elementary school we had to do a cultural trip concerning the wildlife. This was in spring when we went to Harry Apples' camp, about half way from here to Yellowknife. There was about twenty to twenty-five students. So the students all helped pitch up the tent. They all helped me out. They had to clear the ground where the snow was so we can pitch the tent and put spruce boughs in there - *?ori* they call it.
>
> And the students they were small but they really helped. Because the bus brought whole bunch of woods from Rae (the elders they brought that - to burn). The students brought a lot over to the tent. And the poles were there, so the men and the students they pitched up the tent and they cleared the snow. They had to clear the snow off the top and get the ice crystals from inside the snow to make water and tea. And then that evening I made the chicken soup for them. Then the bannock was there. And Harry set the rabbit snares with a couple of boys. Then he took some boys. That evening they used two skidoos and they set some muskrat traps. They did pretty good. They got a good catch. We didn't catch any rabbits.
>
> And early in the morning they went out, eh. Then it was about ten or eleven, I think. About twenty-five kids. [*laughter*] Those sleds were just full of kids. I was glad the adults were really good with kids. We went and checked the net way out on the Great Slave Lake. It was beautiful. Spring time in March. We could go on the ice, so we took the kids out. Then we checked the net with them. Boy! The fish were huge. So we took them. We gathered all the fish. Then we put them away and then set the net back in the lake. Then we took all the fish back to camp.
>
> Then going back to the camp we went to one island. There was lots of snow. Then those guys they cleared the area with snow with their snowshoes - the end of the snowshoes - using it as a shovel. So the kids they helped. Then they went to get some more tree boughs (spruce, *?ori).* Then we sat down with the kids. We made a pot of tea. Everybody had some warm tea. We carried some bread and wieners and things like that and then we cooked some for them. And the elders they had some caribou meat and dry meat and they had some bannock. We sat around the fire. Then the kids they wanted to cook some fish. So we fixed some fish with them. We cooked fish on the open fire for them. Then we cooked the little *pipes* for them. A lot of the kids they had a great time.

Mary Ann laughed when she was asked about the *fish pipes*; about what they are and how you make them. She explained.

> The fish guts? The stomachs? You cut it open. Then you clean the fish. Then you clean that area inside there. You clean off the guts. You use the little - fish pipe they call them. [*laughter*] We clean it. Then we cook it first and after it's cooked nice and burned we just cut it up, open it. Take the little poop off the stomach. Then eat it. The kids all wanted that but there wasn't enough to go around so we shared. [*laughter*] After they finished they were just excited. They started playing around, eh. They went sliding. So they spent mostly all day out in the bush.
>
> We cleaned the muskrat in the cabin. But while we were out there, out in the open area, we took them and we talked to them about those (what do they call those?) - spruce gum. And we showed them where the spruce gum were and what they're good

for. They were good for colds and - like, long time ago they didn't have any doctors. So when a person they had a toothache, they would use the spruce gum and they would bite on it. And sometimes their teeth gets loose, eh. Their teeth would fall out. The elders were telling those students that. So they all went out. They brought back some spruce gum and we gave it to Harry Apples' wife Annie, the elder. She can just chew it and make it into a gum. So we gave that to her.

Then they showed the kids how to set snares - set a snare for the rabbits. And they showed the students about the trail. If it's hardly no tracks, it's not a very good area to set snares and we'll go to a different area. If there's a rabbit track, the foot track and all that, that's where is a good place to set the snares. It tells them that.

Once we got back to the camp an elder showed them how to make dry fish with the fish that we caught. Then we scaled it and cut it up in a certain way. Then she hung it up on a pole with us. And she showed the students how to skin muskrat. The girls all went, "Oooh!" [*laughter*] They didn't want to get dirty. Some of them it was their first time. But some of them they look at their parents, eh. And they remember. They remember that and they tell us what they already know. So it was good. Getting snow. Getting snow for water and getting wood for heat. It was lot of work but the kids they really loved it.

On other occasions Mary Ann would take the students to a tent that was pitched near to the school. She described the young students enjoyment of the out of doors even in the midst of winter's cold.

This was in winter time. On Monday to Friday it's just mostly school work so on Friday I kind of like to go easy on them. So Friday afternoon it's about an hour and - hour to forty-five minutes that we have the students for a certain period. On Fridays I would take the students out and make some tea for them. They have a tent pitched out there. I would make bannock at my house and bring it to the school so I can share it with them. And dry meat. Then I would make sure the tent is heated up before the students go out and make sure there's tea on the stove. Then take out the bannock and dry meat. Then we would bring books out there and sit in the tent and read.

Or one time, I bought about five muskrats with my own money. People they sell them, eh. So I bought five of them for twenty-five dollars and I shared it with the students. I showed them how to cut it and I boiled three in a pot and I cooked three on the open fire and I shared them with the students. Those white teachers from down south, that's the first time they've ever seen muskrat. We gave them some we had boiled. They ate it. [*laughter*]

Sometimes for Health we will go out for a walk. Just listen! I just let them sit in the snow. Just listen to all the new sounds that they hear. Before, - long time ago, before the white man came you would sit out there in the snow and just listen. You'd hear nothing. You wouldn't hear no vehicles, no skidoos, no power saws.

Teaching Cultural Activities in the Classroom

Nora enjoyed sharing her knowledge of sewing with the students. She shared some of her memories of teaching the girls how to make hide slippers and a variety of other articles of beadwork.

> It was a good experience last year. I was teaching culture. This was when they were doing the renovations in the school so I was in a little cubby- hole room with twenty some odd girls, and it was crowded. Anyway, I was teaching them how to do beadwork so we learned all about beads and colors and the needles and the different types of uppers and the vamps, and all those things that have to do with beading, - the necklaces, the bracelets and everything. And I was surprised that most of the girls at that age (thirteen, fourteen) didn't know how to sew. But by the time I was finished the girls made key-chains, they made necklaces, and they made hair barrettes so I was pretty pleased. And one girl came up to me and said, "Thank you. I always wanted to learn to bead, but my Mom never taught me."
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> But it was funny. One of the things I noticed about our students is that most of them are perfectionists. So any little mistake and they would take their whole thing out and start all over again so a lot of them had incomplete work. So I thought, "Gee, what am I going to do? They're never going to finish their project." You know, I only have twelve weeks with them, or eight weeks, or something like that. So I told the girls, "I challenge you all to go home. Go see your Mom or go see your Grandma and ask them to show you the first pair of uppers that they ever made, the first beadwork that they've ever done, and compare it with yours." Well, a few of them did that. Came back as happy as a lark because their work was better than what their grandmothers did. And so they completed their projects.

Helping Students Adjust to School

Rosalie told of teaching study skills and other life skills as Teacher Advisor to the students assigned to her.

> In my TA class (Teacher Advisor) students are assigned to us and every day we get them for five minutes a day. When they come we do the attendance and also give them their lunch tickets. And just spend time together. Be like a family within the classroom. And every Tuesday after lunch we all get together for half an hour. And I noticed that my attendance has gone way up. I think I have about twenty-five in my TA attendance list right now. Most of them are attending.
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> And also I give them little lectures about why school is important. Whenever certain things go on (I do a lot of observations, you know) and if there's not enough interaction I try to do activities. And I also try to do a little bit of sharing circles, where we talk about a subject. I bring up one subject and everybody talks about it. So in a way it's good. And I also talk about studying skills, homework. If they need any kind of homework help I try to, you know, help them out as much as I can.
>
> If they have any kind of problem with any student or teachers we talk about it in our classroom and I try to help them solve it as much as I can. So we do - it's a lot of

group work, you know, like a family group type of thing in the classroom. So it's good. I like it. I have just a few - about three boys that I'm going to have a problem with. It's just a matter of sitting down with them individually and saying, "Hey, this is what I'm expecting from you," you know. There's three young guys who keep wandering around and keep getting into things. One of them is constantly on the phone, and it's an older student so I have to find a way of dealing with him.

I have this individual student who enrolled in the school very late, you know. This was like a month after school started. And they asked him, you know, which courses he wanted to take. First thing he said was, "I want to work with Rosalie." So they told him that this is my class. When he first came to my class I was really scared. Just because, you know (I noticed that rumours, gossip, stuff like that is not good because it interferes with your judgement. I've been thinking a lot about that) - because I've been hearing stories about him raping, stabbing people - a really, really rough character.

And I worked with him September, October, November. Around November (this was really interesting) I just kept working with him. I wouldn't let my judgement get in my way. I kept working with him. And I stayed firm with my teaching. And I let everybody know my expectations. And that I wanted them to meet my expectations. And that there is limit. Nobody is to go beyond my limit, you know - the way people treat each other and all that. I set my limits from beginning and I stuck to it, even with him.

I was really, really afraid of him, you know. Because he's a great big guy. Look at me. Just a small woman. He was a big guy. And one time we were talking about - we were doing a little research on family - family research. And we talked about families, families, families for about two weeks. And he absolutely refused to do his work. He didn't want to do the family research. He didn't want to study his family. He didn't care about his family. He didn't give a "shit" about his families. This was the language that was coming out from his mouth.

And he said (all of a sudden, just out of the blue), "Rosalie!" I was over there doing some work on the blackboard, eh. I said, "Yes?" He said, "Rosalie, do you know who I am?" I said ,"Yeah. I know who you are." And he said, "No. I mean do you really know who I am?" And I said, "Yes. I know who you are. I know all of your family, your grandparents, your uncles, your aunties. All of them." He said, "No. I don't mean that. I mean, do you really know who I am?" I said, "Yes. I know who you are."

And then he said, "Do you know that I am a bad person?" And I said, "I heard a lot of stories about you." And then he said, "Are you scared of me?" And I said, "No. I'm not scared of you." And then he said, "Well you should be scared of me because I'm really bad." And right away I turned around - like, I just turned straight at him and I said, "You know what. There's no such thing as a bad person." I said, "In this whole world (I've lived in this world for thirty-four years of my life) I have never ever met not one bad person."

And he just - you know, his mouth was all wide open and I said, "Really, I'm serious." I said, "I really, really mean it from the bottom of my heart. I have never ever met anybody who can be so bad. You are not bad. You are not a bad person. Sometimes when you're angry, when you're feeling hurt, you do these things to hurt other people. But it doesn't mean you're bad. You are not bad." You know. I said, "A lot of time you have good intentions." I said, "You're a good kid. You're a good guy, you know. You have a chance. You can make a difference."

And I could just see the watering around his eyes. From that day on, for the rest of the year he didn't give me any problems. He just turned himself around completely. And he is the guy - every once in a while I will see him in hall and he would take out his hand and say, "Give me five," and I do that. And he wanted to be in my TA so he's in my TA. He's just like a big teddy-bear-baby type of thing, you know. It's really sad.

And anyway this other girl she would always go straight in the back of the room. And one time this girl and I - there was just the two of us. She came to class real early. She said, "Rosalie!" I said, "What?" She said, "Are you scared of him?" I said, "No!" I said, "Why?" And she said, "You know, he's really, really scary. He can really hurt people." And she said, "I'm really scared of him." This was earlier in the year, eh. A lot of time students would not look at him in the eye. Nobody would look at him in the eye. And when he came in their heads just went down, eh.

But after he asked me those questions about being bad, everything just changed, from that day on. When he came to the class sometimes he would act up a little silly. They would say, "What are you doing. Go sit down. Do your work." And they would talk with him. They would joke around with him. I really opened the door for him you know, when that happened. He opened the door himself too. Yeah.

And then just before the end of semester I was sitting in the class. Everybody had their little quizzes. People were quiet. And I came up to that girl again. She was sitting alone. I said, "Can I ask you a question?" very quietly. She says, "Yes." I said, "Remember you asked me if I was afraid of him?" I said, "Are you afraid of him?" She just gave me this great smile and said, "No. I'm not scared. He's just a big teddy-bear" she said. It was really funny.

But the whole atmosphere has changed for him. And he keeps trying - keeps trying. But every once in a while, you know, nobody is perfect. People will always slip back into their old self because they're so used to it. And they're accepted the way they are you know. And people have certain reputations because of the way they are. People don't allow each other to breathe, or they don't allow each other a chance to change. But there's still a hope in him.

He's in my TA. He's just [*chuckle*] trying to drive me up the wall. But he's a good kid. As soon as I say, "OK. That's enough!" he'll just go and sit down and do his work. So it's pretty neat! When I see him, even in public when I see him in town, he will always give me five, you know. Or he'll stick out his thumb like this and say, "Doing great!" and that's what it means. Like, we have our own little signal, you know. And, "Keep doing great!" and positive things, eh. And sometimes there's dances going on. I like to go to dances, eh. And he always acknowledges me. He says, "Ho. this is a great dance isn't it, Rosalie." Just drum dancing. [*laughter*] He's a pretty funny kid. Yeah. It's good.

Evaluating Their Work As Teachers

Like teachers everywhere the Dogrib teachers spend time reflecting on their teaching experiences, evaluating what has been happening in their classes. They celebrate

their successes and learn from their mistakes. Rosalie spoke of her early demands for perfection and how that could be damaging to a student's self-esteem.

> Right now I feel like I'm stronger and I have more knowledge as a teacher and also I'm learning a lot. I've learned a great deal since I became a teacher. Even to this day I'm still learning a lot. And I also have made a lot of mistakes and I'm learning from my mistakes, as a human being you know.

When asked about the changes she had made in her teaching Rosalie replied,

> My goodness! My expectations for students had to change a great deal, a great deal. When I was growing up my mother always had high expectations on me. Everything I did. I never had to make mistakes, and that was expected of me, not to make mistakes; whether it's my first tryout, you know. My mother had so much expectations on me. Even just the basics of learning how to do sewing. The first time I tried she got mad at me when I made a mistake. So I always had to learn how to be perfectionist.
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> So when I started teaching I was always expecting perfection from my students, eh. I expected them to do well when I told them to draw pictures or to do coloring or drawing or printing, or whatever in the primary grade. I always expected everybody to do a hundred percent perfect and that was a real conflict. It wasn't good. Because as a young mother I know that now, eh. That I have to lower my expectations. Because if I don't lower my expectations for my students their self-esteem will go down. So I really, really had to learn to lower that a lot.
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> So a lot of time when my students handed me in their finished work I was always disappointed, but I didn't want to say anything to hurt their feelings. So in a sense that was kind of good because I didn't put them down for it or I didn't criticize them for it. But inside I always knew that I had to lower my expectations. So now when I'm in a classroom teaching, and my students give me the wrong answer or anything I say, "OK. It's all right. It's all right. Don't worry." You know?
>
> A couple of times I was really hard on a couple of my students. One student could read, write, and do her math and all that. And when I wasn't being careful enough with her she made this one silly little mistake and I jumped on her and I said, "What are you doing? What do you think you're doing? You're not supposed to do it like this. You're supposed to do it this way." and I just went on and on and on. And I just let her go without thinking about it.
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> So for about a week she would come back every day making mistakes, making mistakes, making mistakes and it just dawned on me all of a sudden. This is what happened a week ago. That's what's going on. So I had to go back to her then and tell her, "Won't you come and sit with me for a little bit?" So we went and sat and I told her, "When I did that I shouldn't have done it that way. I'm very, very sorry. You're a very, very smart girl and I didn't need to talk to you the way I did." So I had to kind of apologize and talk with her a little bit about it. After that she was fine. But just me jumping on top of her really - I guess I must have made her feel stupid or something, you know. So her self-esteem went down a little bit and she started making a lot of mistakes. And when I told her to do something she would do it completely differently from the way I ask her to do it, you know. So I just had to go back to her and talk to her about it. And she's one of my favourite girls right now. I think she's in grade five right

now and she's one of my favourites. Whenever I see her she'll say, "Hi Rosalie! Hi Rosalie!"

Becoming an Administrator

As one of the earlier Dogrib teacher graduates, Louisa worked in a variety of positions before being appointed to the Principal's Training Program for two years. She worked under the tutelage of one of the principals in the Dogrib Division. After her two year apprenticeship she was appointed principal of the school in which she had trained. She described her experience as principal with all its rewards and its frustrations.

> There are a lot of courses that I wish I had more time to take, but then if you're in a training program you just don't have the time to really do a lot of research on certain things, and to take the courses that you really need. Because you're involved in the daily activity of the school, with the parents, with the students, with the teachers, and you don't just have the time in the day to do a lot of the things that you really need to do.
>
> One of the things that they don't have in the books, that you have to learn on the job, is what do you do when there's accidents; when students get into certain kind of accidents what do you do. I guess one of the things I really need to do is take another first aid course [*chuckle*] because the sight of blood is something I'm not used to at all. That's one of the things that I've had to deal with.

In her work as an administrator she has placed a strong emphasis on working closely with parents and students.

> Sometimes you have parents that are really, really upset about certain things and they don't know how to deal with it and they get angry and then everybody gets angry. And one of the things that I've really tried to do with the parents is explaining the right procedure to do certain things; the protocols of how you deal with things that are related to your children in the school and with the teacher.
>
> And I'm working with a lot of the students about how to deal with a lot of the problems that they are having in the classroom. Some of them I know are major, major problems that happen all through their life. And staying in the school for a while, five hours a day out of a hundred and eighty-five days, is not going to change the person they are or the problems that they're carrying with them. So we try to be more sensitive to what would trigger their outbursts or else what would trigger the behaviour that they're doing in the classrooms.
>
> And so my main focus has been to try to get as much help as I can for the parents as well as for the students. Because you need to identify what or why these outbursts are happening, and then try to help these people so they can help us. But for some reason some of the people (maybe because of their own experiences) they seem to think that it's us against them or it's them against us, and I don't want them to feel that way at all.

> And I'm just trying to get the parents to come in more and to investigate what their children are saying. I know that a lot of parents don't feel comfortable with that at all, and I would like to make them feel more comfortable in coming to the school. And I'm just basically trying to keep the school safe for the kids. A lot of the time when they're in the office or when they leave the school building or else when certain things happen then I would always tell them that their safety is the most important thing to us, and that their learning is taking place. That we're here for them. That it's for the students that we're here. And we keep telling the parents the same thing.
>
> I think a lot of it is just a learning process. I know that a lot of the parents haven't gone through school themselves. So they don't really know about the curriculum and the reading program - the different programs that we have in the school. They don't really have a lot of ideas about that and we need to share that a lot with the parents. So that at least they have a little bit of knowledge when they go into the classrooms to talk to the teacher to find out how their students are doing. They can't do that if they don't really have a lot of the background information.
>
> And so I've been telling the staff to share their year plans with the parents, share their schedules with the parents. One of the things that we really still have to work on is the communication. Make sure that the communication with the parents is always there. And the other thing that we really need to educate the public on is that they need to come in to the school more. They need to do a lot more things with us at the school, because I think - because the school structure is too foreign for them. We always had open door policies but we hardly see parents come here on their own just to talk and visit. I know they're very busy themselves but it would be nice to just form that friendship with the teachers. And just be on a real comfortable level so that they can share things.

The heavy burden of paper work is a continuing frustration for Louisa, taking time away from her important work with parents and children.

> But the biggest problem that I find is just not enough time to do all the paper work. There's just so much paper work. Sometimes I forget to answer letters and sometimes some of the things that I really need to do I'm not able to do. Because during the day I'd rather be here for the students and the staff and the parents. And sometimes when I do come in the evenings also you have other support staff that you have to work with that you have to deal with.

The Value of Having Dogrib Teachers

Relating to the People of the Community

The teachers expressed their conviction of the value of belonging to their Dogrib culture in their role as teachers. They have close relationships with the children's parents and are able to communicate more easily with them. Speaking the Dogrib language is an

important aspect of the ability to communicate with both parents and students. Louisa talked of the importance of that ability to communicate as she spoke of her community's response to a tragic accident.

> The school year - at the beginning there was a community tragedy that happened and so it really affected the staff. It affected the people in the community. It affected the students because one of the person involved was a young student from here. And it was just about a whole month of just not knowing at all. A lot of the community people as well as students and staff haven't really gone through the proper grieving stage. A lot of these things weren't really happening. So that kind of feeling, I think, just sort of went through the whole year with the community people.
>
> And so dealing with the tragedy - I think in a way it really helped me a lot because I'm from the community. I'm able to go into their homes and go into the community and really be visible for them. And being the person from the community I think it really makes a lot of parents comfortable. So they're able to phone me and use either language to get information about their students or else some concerns that they have.

Being Dogrib has also been helpful to Anna in her teaching. She finds that some of the parents are very interested in their children's education and will talk with her about it when she meets them in the community. She encourages them to drop into her classroom frequently.

> The parents are really comfortable coming in my class. If they need to talk to me they just walk in. But it's not like that in that other teacher's class - the white teacher. Sometimes the parents stop at my door. They ask me, "Is it OK to go in that class?" I tell them I'm not the boss. They have to go there and ask.

Knowledge of the Students' Social Situation

As part of the relatively small communities within which the students are growing up the Dogrib teachers all have an intimate knowledge of the students' social and cultural milieu, and they know the individual circumstances and histories of each student's extended family. Mary Ann explained the value of knowing the students' home backgrounds and their life histories.

> I know a lot of kids they're really having a struggling time, reading and writing. Right now in the "In-School Suspension" room they have to write down why they're in there and what went wrong with the teachers. Or why were they put inside In-School Suspension you know. I just look at their paper. They're really having a struggling time writing. And the teachers, you know, they want them to be perfect students. But they're

having problems with themselves. And so they have to be in school because their parents said so. So they come to school even though they don't want to. So they start lashing out at the teachers. So quite a few of them they got suspended.

But the teachers - like the "fly-in" teachers, they don't know how the kids live, you know. Some kids come to school with empty stomachs. Some kids come to school when their parents were playing O.K.O. all night, drinking all night, you know. Lots of kids are angry and they come to school and the teachers, if they're being hard on them, then it gets out of hand, eh. You know, those kids, they're just mad at themselves, mad at their parents. So they lash out at teachers, eh. So I think that's where their problem is. Things like that. 'Cuz a lot of students they always come to me, eh. I talk to them. I try to help them. But sometimes they're way beyond my help. But I understand them. I know all those kids, so I know how to talk to them. I know everybody in Rae I guess, so I know how to talk to them so they understand me.

Dogrib Teachers As Role Models

Having Dogrib teachers for role models is another result of the Aboriginal teacher education programs. The students in the schools no longer see the "high-status" positions in the school being held by only southern non-Dogrib teachers. Lena sees the importance of her position as a role model to the students in her community.

And as I was talking to some of the students, when I was teaching my Dogrib course with them, I talked about myself, how it was, how I became a teacher. I was talking to them and I encouraged them to stay in school. And they understood what I went through because I talked to them. I told them that it's really a struggling work but toward the end it's worth it. I told them that. And I asked them, "Do you know why I feel happy now?" and they said, "Because you made it." You know, I talk to them about myself so that they understand how it is.

Discipline and Classroom Management

Teaching Respect and Caring

Rosalie emphasizes good communication skills and promotes an attitude of respect and caring within her classroom. She spoke of the differences she has noticed between the behaviours of kindergarten boys and girls, and reflected on the possible reasons for the difference.

The other group that I had last year was some kindergarten kids. Oh wow! Those kindergarten boys! It's mostly boys. Girls are usually OK. Girls are usually good at expressing themselves. I don't know why. I think the mother has a lot of role model in raising kids. So a lot of times you'll see that girls are very good at expressing themselves in some ways, you know. They talk about themselves. But the boys don't do

that. The fathers - well you know, usually the men don't cry. Men don't do this and do that, you know. So these little boys are like that. They don't cry and they don't express their feelings.

But as soon as they get angry or as soon as they get frustrated, the first thing they do is slash, or attack, or kick, or hit, and that's the kind of role models a lot of them have at home too, I guess. So anyway, last year I had these boys whose behaviour was really bad too. But with that class I really needed to have all my program structured and organized. And so, when I first started, the behaviour was kind of out of it for a while. But even with that class too I noticed that the boys - they just really need to learn to express themself.

And couple of times when I started setting limits (what is acceptable in that classroom and what isn't) when they noticed that I was setting limits the boys were not happy with it. So a couple of them threw a tantrum. I said, "This is how far you can go with your behaviour. You cannot go beyond that." And when I started doing that they started fighting it. And they started throwing tantrums because I wouldn't give in to what they wanted, and what they wanted to do, and stuff like that. It was really interesting. So when I set my limits, slowly, gradually their behaviour started to simmer down.

I would just ask for the basics. You know, that they treat each other with respect. Within a classroom I always use this family theme to the school, you know. I say, "We go to school together every day. And we live together as a family. You treat each other as a family. You do things together as a family. We take care of each other. We help each other." I always use that in my classrooms. Like, if somebody's hurt we'll help each other. If somebody doesn't know how to write their name we'll help each other. And I always use that. And I don't like to say, "No hitting. No fighting. No swearing." Like, I don't like to put "No" to things. It looks like negative things. So I always try to be positive when I set my rules, you know. Like, "Let's be together. Let's have lots of respect for each other. Let's be nice to each other. Take care of each other. We share with each other." We did a lot of that.

But if there was any kind of hitting, kicking it was not accepted, and I had to put a stop to it. Like, maybe give them a "time out", eh. "You go and sit over there and think about what you've done. Do families - ?" you know. "Should families be hitting each other like this? Kicking each other?" And a lot of time students will answer each other. When I put a question like this, you know. "No. We take care of each other. Supposed to love each other." So this little guy would be put aside - (for kindergarten you cannot set them aside for too long, eh. For five minutes is way too long) - but five minutes is the limit.

'Cuz they have to learn to, you know, have some self-control on their movement and stuff like that. And when they come back I would sit quietly with them and I would say, "So, what do you have to say?" And they say, "Teacher, I'm really sorry." I would say, "No, no, not to me. Who are you going to apologize to?" And they say the one that they were being mean to. And I say, "OK, let's go over there." And when it's time to apologize they can't just say, "I'm sorry!" You know, usually they'll do that. But they have to do it sincerely, you know. "I'm really, really sorry." And they have to give each other hugs.

And not only that, but before we get to that hugging and apologizing I want them to sit and talk about their behaviour, you know. "Was that being very good? Was that nice? How do you think that other person feels when you do that, when you're

kicking or hitting?" or - you know. And I always tell them that it's OK to talk about feelings, you know, and behaviours and - I don't know. I try to practice that a lot.

'Cuz, you know, as a parent as soon as I say, "Don't do this. Don't do that" the kids automatically do it, eh. So I don't like to put "No" and "Don't" and stuff like that. I noticed that with my little baby. As soon as he does anything, if I say, "No!" he'll just cry. So I don't like to use the word "No" or "Don't" to little kids. I try to put it in more positive way [*laughter*] as much as I can.

But within the classroom I always want to see my students treating each other with a lot of respect, you know, having some consideration for each other. And whenever they have any kind of upset feeling, angry or hurtful feelings, I want them to be able to express that instead of going hitting and scratching. 'Cuz I don't think that's appropriate way. And we also have to teach that anyway. So I just practice that a lot in the classroom.

But I don't know how I can teach that values [of respect and caring] in high school. They're so used to - they're so used to their own system often - the way that they treat people and the way that they treat each other. And I don't like that. I don't like it when people are being naturally mean to each other or saying nasty things to each other or making fun of each other. I don't like the idea of people hurting each other's feeling, you know. I don't think that's appropriate.

But I don't - I still have to learn how to teach that to high schools. I have to work at it I guess. Basically they have to have good self-esteem. But even that with a lot of - a lot of senior high students - it's really hard to teach. It's really hard to reach them with that. They want to be reached, you know. You can sense it when they want to be reached. But for some reason it's hard. They make it very difficult to be reached. Yeah, that's very difficult. But a lot of them are coming around. A lot of the good students are the - they're always the first one to come around, you know. And the most difficult students - they're always the last one. Or they never come around. And it's really hard for me. 'Cuz I really, really want to reach them. I know - I know I'm reaching a lot of them. They're just not coming around fast enough [*laughter*] They're just too slow.

Different Student Behaviours for Dogrib and non-Dogrib Teachers

Discipline does not appear to be as much of a "problem" for the Dogrib teachers as it seems to be for non-Dogrib teachers (judging from staff room conversations). Anna thinks that most of the children in her class behave differently for her than the classes do for their non-Dogrib teachers; perhaps, she suggests, because she knows the children, who are part of her own community, and she knows their parents and other relatives well.

Sometimes that other teacher says, "Oh, my kids were so hyper." Or he'll say the kids were so bad - talk about the negative behaviours - say, "I had a really, really bad day." But the kids don't behave like that when they come to my room - say like at indoor recesses, or other times. Maybe it's because I'm from their community and they know me and I speak their language.

> For myself, I really enjoy being with the kids. When there's no school sometimes I get bored at home on weekends. I come back to school and do some things in my classroom. Even when the kids get "hyper" like, it doesn't really bother me. Like, sometimes in the cold weather they have lot of indoor recesses. Then they get hyper, maybe about once a week. I can tell when it starts to happen. I give them an activity break. Usually around 2:00 or 2:15 they start to get tired. So I give them a break to help them wake up. Sometimes I put music on for them to dance to. They dance up and down, jump around, scream, make as much noise as they want. Just two, three minutes. After, lie down on the floor for two or three minutes. Then I tell them, "Let's get back to work."

Mary Ann too spoke of the value of knowing the children and their culture and attempted to explain how things can "get out of hand" between the students and their "fly-in" teachers from southern Canada.

> The girls like to tease one of the white teachers. He's friendly but the girls they just - you know those students. They really try to get to those white teachers. 'Cuz the white teachers they don't understand Dogrib and they don't know what the students are saying about them, eh. But that teacher he's got humour so he just teases back. He doesn't mind they're teasing him. But sometime it gets way out of hand, eh.

Nora spoke of a noticeable difference between the students' ways of behaving within the school and their behaviour when they are "on the land", or in a more traditional cultural setting. She described some of those differences in her stories of her students' excellent behaviour on their field trips. She reflected on the possible reasons for the different levels of behaviour.

> Maybe the structure is different. Maybe the structure in school is so rigid. You go to class for what - I think it's sixty-five minutes, but last year it was an hour. And you're expected to sit in your seat for an hour and do your work. Maybe our kids need - in elementary they have learning centres. Maybe that's something the kids still need in high school, junior high. They still need that physical movement.

> Not only that. It's fun to defy the teacher. It's fun to break the rules and get away with it. That's why every kid does it. And sometimes too, it reflects on their home life, things they're seeing at home. All that is brought into the school because it's a safe place. At least for that little while it's safe. But that's probably what kids need.

Failures in Communication Between Dogrib Students and Non-Dogrib Teachers

Often the students are not fluent in the English language. Added to the cross-cultural confusion of different customs, concepts and values between the Dogrib and mainstream cultures, the lack of fluency in the language can result in lack of good

communication between students and their southern, non-Dogrib teachers. Mary Ann spoke of that kind of lack of communication.

> And so I think that's where the problems [are]. That's why (some of them) they're given some work and it's not explained good or they don't understand English. Two, three, four days and they don't know what their lesson's all about so it gets out of hand, I think.

As a counsellor, Nora worked to improve communication between troubled students and their parents as well as between students and their teachers.

> A lot of it is boy-friends, girl-friends breaking up, pregnancy, alcohol, drugs, home life; people not listening or understanding what they had to say. I guess young people still don't know how to really express themselves. They get into trouble and they don't - it's not as serious as it looked at the time, to the teacher or whomever. And when I get them and find out their side of the story (because the teacher's already done a write-up) it's two different things that happened, you know.
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> So a lot of times I was an advocate for the students. Well I had to be, I guess, in that situation. There's a lot of those sort of things that I had to deal with. A lot of times parents would call me and ask me to talk to their kids about certain situations. So I'd listen to what the parents had to say and I'd listen to what the students had to say. And I would go back and talk to the parents and say, "You know, maybe you should try this or try that" and tell the students the same thing.
>
> A lot of time they just need communication. I know that as a parent. I tell my kids, "I'm angry. You listen to me because you're not going to win this fight. Listen to me rant and rave for five minutes, and then you can explain yourself afterwards. Don't try to explain yourself when I'm ranting and raving, 'cuz you're not going to win." And as long as my kids knew that, they let me blow my top off and then they would go back to me and say, "Mom this is what happened. You weren't listening," you know. So I try to tell parents that too.
>
> There were some cases with teachers where there were personality conflicts. They just didn't like each other. And those were tough ones to work with. In those situations (because the teachers were colleagues) I still had to really fight for the student. So sometimes I'd pull them out of that class and try to get them into another one. Or try to get them to do it by correspondence with - at that time they had volunteers that came in and worked with them. Those were the sorts of things that I did. 'Cuz it was, you know - can't go against my colleague and you don't want the kid to quit school because of that. So there were things like that when I had to work with the teachers and the student.

Cultural Differences in Approaches to Discipline

Because of social breakdown in the communities, discipline is often seen as being a major problem within the schools. Whereas southern teachers often look at applying a

"reasonable consequence" as a means of controlling students' undesirable behaviour, the Dogrib teachers repeatedly described a way of "talking" to the students as a means of helping them develop self-control.

Mary Ann described working in that way with students who have been sent to the In-School Suspension room.

> But in the In-School Suspension room they were sitting there and I told them, "Gee, you guys are just sitting there. Should be in school, you know, learning. Trying to learn from the teacher. The teachers are here to help you guys learn. But if you guys just screw your day up because of your foolishness, you know, you guys don't learn nothing in the In-School Suspension room."
>
> So I found a book and I gave it to them. I said, "Find words that you can read and find a word that you can't read. If you can't read it put it on the side, you know. And we'll help each other find what the word is." But if they're in the In-School Suspension room, some of them are there for half a day and some of them (because they took off early yesterday) they're there nine o'clock 'til three. That's a long day to be inside one room.

Rosalie spoke of using talking a great deal when working with students and stressed the necessity of showing patience.

> But as of today, as a teacher, I feel like I can really relate with my students. I understand what they're going through. And I also understand their feelings. And whenever they behave in a certain way, if it's a negative behaviour, I would always sit with them and say, "Hey, what's going on? Why don't you talk to me? Tell me what's going on?" And if I sit there and show my patience they will sit and talk to me. Tell me what's going on and if they need help they'll talk to me. So I always try to be there for my students. 'Cuz that's very important for me. I always believe that's the most important thing, is to help them deal with, you know, whatever they're dealing with.

That kind of empathetic, non-controlling approach to working with students was expressed by the other Dogrib teachers as well. Anna described the sensitive nature of a human reproduction unit she was teaching in health. She usually introduces a new unit with concrete materials and bulletin board displays, but she was unsure of whether to do a bulletin board as she usually does. She was afraid the children in the next class might see the display and afterwards might tease the smaller children. When some of the children asked her if she was going to put their work up on the wall she told them "It's up to you. You have to decide."

She observed them talking about it in small groups of two or three through the day, speaking quietly or whispering together. The next day they told her that they had decided "No!" They asked to have the small window in the door covered up while they were working on that unit and some of the children asked her if she would be discussing their work or showing it to the kindergarten teacher or the other elementary teacher. They indicated that they didn't want her to do that. So she asked those people not to come into her room while she was teaching the health lesson.

She feels that the children know that she is "the boss" in her class, but she feels strongly that the classroom is like their second home. It is important for them to be comfortable there. So she does not feel that she can tell them everything to do. They have to be able to make decisions so they will feel that the classroom is their own place. That way of teaching is in keeping with the traditional Dogrib practice of making decisions through consensus. To make the final decision Anna used a blend of a traditional consensus form of decision-making and the southern democratic practice of allowing for a majority vote.

> If I decide everything to put up on the walls I might put up something they don't like. They might get mad at me and it won't be like second home for them. When I have to make a big decision the children have to talk to each other. And they have to make an agreement.
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> When they were deciding (like, if I should put their work up on the wall) at first the grade one kids said, "Yes!" right away. But the grade two and three kids kept talking to each other. I saw them whispering and talking quietly in the corner. Later they told me they decided, "No!" so I said, "OK. We'll take a vote on it." Only two kids voted to put the work up so I said, "We'll go with the majority."

As teachers within the Dogrib Division respond to their different cultural heritages, a blend of discipline approaches seems to emerge. Rosalie went on to discuss the recently adopted policy of In-School Suspension, which appears to follow the mainstream approach of applying a consequence as a deterrent to negative behaviour. Rosalie compares it to the familiar educational concept of "time out". However, within that

framework, she continued to use her preferred method of providing guidance by talking seriously to the students.

> I think what happens is some students they like to wander in the hall. And there are some students who are in classes but a lot of time are not doing their school work. They just want to kind of hang out and fool around and stuff like that. So if they're not doing their school work or if you find someone wandering in the hall you just send them into the suspension. And while in suspension we give them little questionnaire sheets that they have to fill out. Basically write a little about why they're in suspension, what kind of problem is it causing in the school and what are they going to do about it.
>
> So that's what we do and while they're in suspension they just sit in there. If they have work, well they can do their work in there. So it's more of a "time out" from the classroom. That's what it is. That's all I know. I don't know how often do they have to be in there. Depends on individuals. Some students are in school and all they do is just fool around. They're not taking their school serious at all. And some of the older students are being very immature. So if they're going to continue behaving like that, if their behaviour - if they're spending a lot of their time in In-School Suspensions, then they have to get suspended for a day or a week. Depends on what they're in there for.
>
> It just started, just very recently. I think it started, like a couple of weeks now, Yeah. Two weeks - two weeks now. And I think it's working 'cuz I don't see a whole lot of students in the hall. Or even when they're in the classroom they certainly are trying to do their school work.
>
> Like, sometimes if you sit with individual people, individual students and they say, "This is what I want to do with my life," you know, they talk about their career. Some of them will talk about, "Well, I want to become a lawyer." But because they don't have any guidance at home it's really difficult. It's really, really difficult. Nobody ever asks them how are they going to get there. What do they have to do and what do they need to do. Nobody seems to talk to them about that, besides the teacher and the school counsellors and principals, you know.
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> At home I don't think a lot of them are getting any messages from parents. So they're just kind of lost without guidance at home and when they come to school it's really frustrating. That's what I see. 'Cuz I just spent about an hour in Suspension and I talked to individuals, you know. Some of them are sent to In-School Suspension almost every day. And I would sit and talk with them and say, "Well, tell me - think about your future. Think about when you're twenty-five years old or when you're thirty years old. What would you like to be doing?" you know. "Think about that." And automatically they tell me what they want to be.
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> And then I say, "Well, if that's what you want to do, if you want to be a lawyer or a teacher or, you know, then what do you need to do right now to get there? You have to put some work into it before you go there, you know. And you have to put in effort." And they tell me all the things they need to work on, "My reading, my writing," you know, and all that. I say, "Well, if that's what you really want to do, what are you doing in here, in In-School Suspension?" And they think about it for awhile. "I won't ever do this again in classes. I won't misbehave" or "I won't - ," you know. So I hope it's working. Sometimes they give their words but sometimes it doesn't happen. But one particular student I was sitting and talking to, he just looks so unhappy - sad. I just don't know what to do for people like that sometimes.

Respect for Individual Freedom and Autonomy

Attendance and late arrivals have been problems within the Dogrib schools and some of the older parents do not insist that their children attend school regularly. Rosalie was asked if it is traditional for the Dogrib people not to "force" their children to do things. In her response she described the expectations people had held for children in earlier, more traditional times.

> Nope. It's not part of our traditions. In the olden days, I guess, when people still lived in very traditional life style, everybody had a role and responsibility to the family. And in those days they didn't feel sorry for their kids. When kids were at a certain age, well, they had - they did have certain roles and responsibilities in the home, and they had to do it, you know. Parents didn't feel sorry for their kids. Because they know that kids have to start practising and learning, you know. And that was their way of making input to the family I guess, you know. 'Cuz every family member had roles and responsibilities in the home.
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> So I don't think a grandfather or a mother or father would have said, "Well, my child will have to decide whether they want to chop wood or not." There was no such thing as that. If they were supposed to chop wood, well they had to do it. Because if they don't, you know, who's going to cook the food? There will be no fire in the house. So they had to do it. It wasn't a child who had to make decisions.
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> Not making kids go to school that was the older parents. Like, older parents (I mean like my mother and my father and they're in their seventies) - parents around that age did that a lot. But I think a lot of the older people who are in their fifties (fifties, sixties, seventies and older) they tend to feel - it's not that they don't want to tell their kids what to do, or their grandkids. They just don't want to hurt them. So a lot of time these older parents will say, "Well, I'm not going to force my child to go to school. That will be his own decision." But I think it's a big mistake.

Story-Telling As a Help in Class Management

Mary Ann explained how she used "old time" stories to help in settling her class down when they became restless.

> So when I talk about my past experience with them, you know, they really listen. The other day they were just out of hand. They were so hyper for some reason. So I let them work for about half an hour. Then I made them clean up. Put everything away. So when we put everything away then I asked them to sit in a circle. We were going to talk about their problems, because their behaviour was out of hand. I couldn't handle it. And so I started talking to them.
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> And so what came to my mind was my little granddaughter (she's always scratching her head, eh). So I started talking about lice. [*laughter*] I started talking about lice. I said, "There was one girl in long time ago, you know, she was so lazy that

she wouldn't take care of herself. She was so filthy that her lice were getting out of hand and they started drinking her blood on her scalp. She was so lazy that those lice they dragged her by the hair all the way to the water and they drowned her, eh." I heard that story one time so I started talking to them about that.

Then they started asking questions. They were just quiet for about fifteen minutes. Then I asked them, "Talk about you guys problem. Tell me, eh, in the open." But they were kind of shy to tell me about it. But when they get in that condition I just talk to them about stories eh, about what I went through.

"One time," I said, "I was playing with my friends. They were playing cards (like for twenty-five cents - playing cards) just a friendly game. Then I looked at the time. It was two o'clock in the morning. I was supposed to be working tomorrow morning in the hospital. So I started heading home. That's the time they had no street lights. There's no electricity in Rae. Just nothing, eh. I was heading home. Then suddenly I heard somebody whistling, like a scary whistle. [*whistle*] Something like that. And I tried to run home but I got so scared inside. I tried to run but I couldn't run," I said. And they really got interested. So they were asking me all kinds of questions about those Bushman stories. So we just sat there. For about fifteen minutes they were really quiet just listening to those stories. [*laughter*]

Loss of the Dogrib Language

Progressively Greater Loss of Oral Dogrib

At the high school level it appears that the students are still relatively fluent in their Dogrib language but a decline in Dogrib fluency begins to be noticed at the junior high school level. Rosalie related her experiences with a group of high school students and compared their Dogrib language skills with those of junior high school and primary students.

But (this is really funny) when I first started the class they were playing games with me, you know, especially the kids from outlying communities. I wanted to know how many people could speak the Dogrib. Some of them said, "No, I don't speak Dogrib at all." But I kept thinking about it. I let it go, eh. I let this go for a little bit, for about one week. And then finally I said, "You know guys, knowing where you come from, knowing your Moms and Dads, knowing who you are, it's really hard for me to believe that you don't speak Dogrib at all." After that they all started speaking Dogrib. It was really funny. They are strong with their oral language.

But junior high , most of them are raised here in Rae. And it depends on who you're teaching I guess. Which parents, which family they come from. A lot of them have good strong language. But there's about a handful of them that don't speak Dogrib eh, in junior high. I think I have twenty-four. Out of twenty-four maybe five of them don't speak Dogrib at all. But everybody else has their language and some of them that are raised by older parents or grandparents they have some good knowledge. Not as good as senior high, but you know there is a difference between junior high and senior high. For oral language they were (the senior highs that I'm talking about) they were

very fluent. They had very good Dogrib. All the click sounds that we have in Dogrib there's no problem with any of that.

The only thing I really struggled over with them was the writing of it. They didn't know the Dogrib alphabet, eh, and not only that but some of them (because of their attendance from years before) a lot of them didn't know their alphabet sounds at all. Doesn't matter whether it was English or Dogrib. Some of them didn't know their alphabet sounds. So that's kind of sad. And it was really frustrating for me and for them too. I had a big class first semester. But right now I have small class and I'm hoping to keep it very small. I think I have, like ten on the list. But I've been having four to five students every day. Which is really good. I can work with individual people, help them out as much as I can. Because even as of today I know who's going to have problem with their reading or writing. Doesn't matter which, either English or Dogrib. They're going to have problem with it.

Mixing English and Dogrib

Mary Ann described the tendency of many students to mix together their use of English and Dogrib.

With some girls in my classes they're Dogrib but they can't speak it. They don't speak it but they understand. High school students they mostly talk Dogrib pretty good. But junior high it's just a little of this and a little of that. It's all mixed - mixed Dogrib with English. I know there's about two of the junior high students where they're just fluent in Dogrib. But most of them just speak English and Dogrib. Little of this and little of that mixed together. When they ask questions, you know, it's just a short question with Dogrib and English mixed. But some of the junior high - there are about two or three who are just right on in Dogrib because they stay with their elderly grandparents. Them they are fluent in Dogrib. That's what I've found.

Nora also commented on the prevailing mixture of English and Dogrib within the students' speech.

I know we have a bi-lingual program in place. Somehow we need to build on it because we're finding students that are coming in the school who don't speak full Dogrib and they don't speak English. Now I forget - there's a word for that. It's not called bi-lingual, and it's not even called mono-lingual because they don't have either language. The Dogrib that they have - a lot of it is slang. The English that they have is still at the stages of baby talk, I guess. Enough to get by with and that's about it.

And I think it's those kids being in that area - that's where we are having trouble with our students' reading and writing. They don't have the language skills so they can't express themselves. And I believe that's where a lot of frustration comes in because they don't have the language so they can't understand what is being asked of them to do. That's one of the most important things that we really need to work on.

Differing Concepts and Values Between Dogrib and Mainstream Cultures

Conflicts Within the Curriculum

Teaching in a culture which is very different than mainstream Euro-Canadian culture Dogrib teachers cannot avoid the discovery that some aspects of the curriculum they are required to teach do not fit with the teachings and values of their own culture. Rosalie told of making such a discovery in her first year of teaching in a primary class.

> Teaching science was really difficult. Because as native people, we have completely different beliefs than what the curriculum tells. For example, for primary grade if you're talking about living things (one thing that I'll never forget) one time I really got stuck right in the middle of my teaching. Because I had a whole bunch of concrete materials; all sorts of different stuff like living and not-living stuff and as each student picked up an object they would tell whether it's a living thing or a non-living thing and they would tell why they think that this object is a living thing.
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> And when I first started I picked up a piece of rock and I said, "Is this a living or non-living thing?" And some kids said, "Yeah, it's a living thing" and some other kids said, "No. This is not a living thing. It cannot breathe," or "It will not grow. Does not eat," and you know, "It's not a living thing." And I got really, really stuck with it. Right there at the moment I had to make a decision of where I'm going to put it. So it was really difficult, eh. Because as we're growing up we are told within our culture that things like rocks and stuff like that are living things. So it was really difficult. But I told them, "Well, if you listen to your elders they will tell you that this piece of rock is a living thing. It does breathe. It's a living thing." So I really had to struggle with that. But I put it in the living things. I said, "For our culture this is a living thing." And then I took another piece and I said, "And also we can see it as a non-living thing. 'Cuz it doesn't really breathe. It doesn't really eat or even it doesn't grow." So it was a real conflict thing for me.

In the rational-scientific reasoning prevalent in European-Western thought it is difficult to believe that a rock can be both a living and a non-living thing. In a culture which views the world in a more holistic, multifaceted way the apparent conflict of ideas does not seem as difficult to accept. Rosalie was asked if the primary children were able to accept that solution to the conflict.

> Yes, they do. They accept that. For a lot of these little kids (especially primary students) a lot of the parents are not practising as much tradition as they used to, you know. They don't need to make their living off the land now as much as our people used to in the past. So their life is very modern life and they go to the store, do all their shopping and all of that. So their modern life is more of community life.

Spiritual Foundation of Life

At the heart of the Dogrib culture and other Dene cultures, lies a spiritual understanding of the world which forms the foundation for their world view, or cosmology. It contrasts to some extent with the rational-scientific view of the world that has dominated Euro-Canadian thought in this century (although many exceptions to that rational-scientific view can be found). That spiritual foundation of the Dogrib understanding of the nature of the world is expressed in the curriculum document *Dene Kede*, (1993) which was developed cooperatively by the Dene groups in the Northwest Territories.

Changes in the expression of their spirituality occurred for the Dene people after the coming of European exploration and the fur trade. Explorers and traders were followed by a number of Christian missionaries. Members of the Oblate Order of the Roman Catholic Church were active in the Dogrib area within the Northwest Territories. Many Dogrib people were influenced by the Oblate missionaries and became members of the Roman Catholic Church. Today, schools are required to provide time for instruction for students in the Catholic faith.

At this time the spiritual life of many of the people in the Dogrib communities still revolves around the church. But there is a uniquely Dogrib aspect to the services held in Lena's small settlement. There, weekly church services are held in the homes of community members and are followed by a traditional community feast. The feast contributes to the close relationships of the community members. Lena described the services held in her community.

> People from another community came, and the people they went to the church with us. We were having a mass at an elder's house. After mass they were just about to go and we asked them, "Where are you going?" We told them, "You can stay for the feast." They were so surprised because they didn't know about that. A woman said that even though they have a church in their community but after church they never have a feast or anything. People they just go home. And it's not like that here. She said that her kids they enjoyed it too. That's what she told me. And she said that she hoped that this will happen in her community too.

> And one of the men when he talked to us, he said that Jesus had his last supper with his disciples. So for us it's like that. We're like a family and we don't want this to die out. He said we'll continue doing it even though we have a church here. We'll still have our feast in the community hall. That's what he said.

Nevertheless, for many of the people, membership in the church has not eliminated the spiritual understanding which they held before the coming of the missionaries. Rosalie talked about that aspect of her cultural heritage; about the original spiritual understandings which had sustained the people for centuries and which remain strong in the Dogrib culture of today.

> The native spirituality! Like when we talk about the native spirituality a lot of the values are very important. That's basically what it is. And also to live a life with a free spirit. That's what I call it, free spirit; to be addiction free and all that stuff. Because if you want to seek a quest (visions or just seeking a quest) - if you want to do any of those things you have to be a free spirit from addictions. Because a lot of time the addictions (like using drugs, drinking alcohol or gambling - any of those things) will interfere with your spirit. And it will put a lot of negative impact on you emotionally, you know, physically, mentally and spiritually. So you need to be free of those things.
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> A lot of time the elders also say, "Your mind needs to be very clear." Otherwise you may be given a gift - (elders also believe that people are born with a gift. That we're all given a seed from the time we're born. The older we get we have to search for our gifts, whatever we're very good at. That's our given gift.) And if you keep using these addictions they will interfere with that and you may not be able to seek your, you know, your quest or seek out your visions. And that's all part of spirituality.
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> So I really stress to the students that they try to stay addiction free. Like, drum is very important to us, you know. That's part of our prayer. We use that for prayers. And even if you're going to become a drummer you still need to be addiction free. 'Cuz if you use addictions that would interfere with how committed you are to your drum, you know. You need to be, you know, free of all those negative things if you're gonna be a singer too. Even the songs that are given to you it just doesn't come right to you. It's given to you by the Creator. And that's your talent. That's your gift. And if you're given a gift like that you need to take good care of it, you know. You need to be very spiritual, free of addictions. And if you don't (all of that) you can lose it one way or the other. And it's true!
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> And also for the young people to know about their legends. Legends are very, very important to us as Dogrib people, you know. Because through the legends we know all the sacred lands. Through legends we know how the animals have changed their appearance. And also through the legends we know about our histories, eh. Like things that went on years and years ago. Like, if the elders tell us stories (legends about long ago) they always will say this. Long ago animals they used to live like people. So animals and people were able to communicate. They always refer to that. So it makes you think, "What was our life like?" So it's quite interesting.
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> And also they always talk about the environment of how things have changed, through the legends, you know. Like if you're talking about Yamohza, the one who circled the earth, even him through his travelling he put a lot of sacred marks on the

land throughout the north. And a lot of them (sacred marks) you can see it even to this day. Or when peace - when peace was made between the Dogrib and the Chipewyan around the Mesa Lake (where they had the drum dance when they made the peace and danced for three days) even that mark is still there for us to see. So it's very important for us as Native people to know about the legends, especially now that we're working on the land claims - our legends and our history stories that we're told from our elders. We need to depend on those as people are dealing with land claims.

It's our history. So that's one of the reasons why it's really important. And I noticed, when I was teaching Tli Cho 15 [Dogrib 15] with the first semester that I had, that I was really observing my students on how much they knew. When I watched them carefully I noticed that a lot of students who came from outlying communities like Wekweti (Snare Lake) Rae Lakes and Lac La Martre, they knew a lot about their legends. They have knowledge of it. And they seem to understand it. And this one student whom I really, really enjoyed was from Snare Lake. Oh, that kid has so much knowledge. He knows everything about his culture. Whenever I talk about hunting caribou he says, "I know, Rosalie. I know."

I don't want to say a whole lot about that, the native spirituality. We've lost a lot of our native practice. We don't do the sweat lodges anymore. But (just by talking to the elders) they used to have their own little sweat lodges before. When they did their ritual rites they used to use sweat lodges. They used sweat lodges for healings and stuff like that. And a lot of that is not being used anymore. Because the church took over. But we still practice a lot of our rites through the drums, you know. People believe in the medicine man, the medicine power. A lot of people still truly believe in that. And just some things are practised.

But when I'm in the classroom with my students we really talk a lot about that, really talk about it. And as young people it's surprising. They do know a lot of information just on that. And they're also very interested in learning about it. So they talk and they ask a lot of questions. And because I can't answer all of their questions I always have elders in the classrooms. And the elders will be there to give answers to their questions and also tell them stories and legends. That's all I can say.

Land Based Values

Other values Rosalie described are common to many cultures but are expressed in unique ways, customs, and traditions among the Dene people.

Elders also teach us a lot about patience. They say nowadays little kids are (the way elders say it) - they say kids are like little animals. They can't sit still. They don't have any patience. Patience is very, very important in our culture. Because (just the basic things if you go out on the land) during summer if you're travelling on a boat, or in winter time if you're travelling by skidoo for a distance, eh, you always have to be patient and wait for the weather, certain weather. You know, like if it's very, very stormy you can't go out in the boat or skidoo so you have to wait and wait and wait. Sometimes you might even have to wait three days to a week before the weather changes. So they teach a lot of patience.

And also when you go caribou hunting you can't go around chasing caribou. You have to learn your patience and wait. And if the animal is going to give itself to you

then the animal will come to you automatically. So you don't need to go running, chasing it. And they also said, if you go around chasing a caribou around and you kill it, the meat doesn't taste as good as it should or the meat is really tough. So they say, "Have patience. Have patience. Patience is very, very important." And I think it's true. Even in school in the classroom having patience is very important within a classroom. If you don't it's going to be very difficult to run a classroom without patience.

And also teaching respect. Some values are more important than others. Like when you teach respect you teach students so they can have respect for themselves; take care of themselves and also others around them; have respect for the environment and the animals; even plants. And I really do practice it a lot when I'm teaching primary grade. Just simple things like you don't go stepping all over people's clothing or you don't go stepping over other people's legs or stuff like that.

When I was growing up I was taught that from the beginning, that I'm not supposed to step over my brother's clothing or even over their legs. I'm not supposed to step over tools and stuff like that. If I did that my mother would say, "Well, your brothers might get sick. Or you might bring bad luck, a curse to them." But it wasn't so much that it was going to happen. It was more of learning respect. By practising that I've learned to have respect for things around me, you know. And take care of things. So that's very, very important. Respect is very important.

And they also say if you have respect for yourselves, others and things around you, then you will - you will tend to take care of your own things, like belongings. As you grow older you'll have more belongings, you'll have more materialistic stuff, and if you don't take care of your things you will be very poor. And it's true in many ways. You will be very poor if you don't take care of yourself and your things. So I think teaching respect is very, very important.

Cultural Differences in Ways of Teaching and Learning

As well as being based on very different world views there appear to be some fundamental differences between the traditional Dogrib ways of teaching and learning and those prevalent in Euro-Canadian public schools. It is important to be aware of those differences and to consider their implications for public education in Dogrib schools today. It is important to ask what teaching values, goals and methods will best assist in the maintenance of the students cultural values and cultural identity in this new world in which they are living. Rosalie described some of the differences between the two different teaching and learning practices as she had observed them.

The way that Native teachers teach kids is that as kids are growing up they do a lot of observations. And also when parents or elders are doing work (say it could be sewing or cooking or making snowshoes - the elders) kids are always around. You know how curious kids are. They want to see what is going on. So a lot of time the elders will allow

kids to sit around them and they'll talk to them as they do their work. You know? And so when kids are growing up they do a lot of observations.

And when parents feel that, well they've had enough observation, it's time for them to do their practice, that's when they sit with them and they give them guidance. And they do a lot of demonstrations, eh. And they will let the children follow them as they do the demonstrations. For me, I watched my grandmother sew a lot and my mother do a lot of sewing and bead work So when it was time for me to start my bead work my Mom cut out two different patterns, one for me and one for her, and the same drawings and all that. When they did the drawing on the uppers she sat with me and she said, "Watch me and copy me." So I've had to do everything that she was doing and the way she was making her stitches, beading the beads and all that. So I had to undo a lot of my sewing. But my mother was very impatient, eh. So she would get upset after a while, my Mom. My father always told her, "Have patience. Have patience." You know. So I did a lot of practice from the time I was very little. But that's how we learned at home. By doing a lot of observing and also when it was time for us to get our practice started, parents or elders would do a lot of demonstrations for us and we followed them. And also you're doing a lot of concrete - touching, smelling, using all your senses, eh.

In school it's a little bit different. We don't do a lot of that. We don't do a lot of handling the concrete materials. We do more of talking - intellectual type of thinking, learning skills. That's what we're doing lot of time. It's very abstract even when we're teaching the language, reading, writing or speaking the English language or Dogrib, even Dogrib language, it's still very abstract. In order for us to teach students we need to make sure they have the concrete materials, using their senses: do a lot of observing, touching and all that for them to learn. Especially primary. At a primary age, I think it's very, very important. And for me as a teacher I try to use as much concrete materials as I can when I teach.

Cultural Identity

Sense of Community

There are many specific differences that could be identified between the Dogrib culture and mainstream Euro-Canadian culture; differences in concepts, customs, rites, traditions and perceptions. A broader, more abstract difference, the sense of community and the strength of community ties is one of those elements of Dogrib cultural identity that was described by some teachers. Rita commented on the closeness of her community's relationships.

The southern culture that we receive is mostly English, like the way they speak, the way they dress, the way people down south live. Or it's mostly different because of different climate and different weather that they have. Really there's a big difference in how people should be preparing, like for different seasons, different events and all the different activities that take place. Whereas in our culture we rely on the land and the animals that we survive on. And as children we rely on our parents too. And even as

> we grow older, because we weren't sent off to school like the southern people did with their children, we keep living with our own families. It's really like a "togetherness" community. People are really together in doing a lot of things. Whereas when we go down south it's just like people are on their own. It's like we're out of place and living in our own community with our own people it's like - it's a big family. We have a lot of support, strong support and as the years go by we know that there's a lot of changes but we still believe that we have a culture to rely on.

Cross-Cultural Confusion

Nora stressed beliefs, values and language factors in her discussion of differences between Dogrib culture and Euro-Canadian culture. Language differences and misunderstood customs often create stress and tension between teachers from the south and the people of the Dene communities they work in. Nora spoke of one of the common, everyday examples of misunderstanding.

> One thing that I find that I have difficulty with a lot of times. We have teachers from the south that come and teach our children and impose *their* values and *their* beliefs. It's good that they have those but a lot of it is not for us. And one of the things I noticed (and it just happened here last week) one of the teachers said, "You guys never say, 'Good morning'." I said, "I know, but that's because it's not in our language. Like, it's not that we're being rude or we're not happy. It's just not in our language. So if we never say 'Good morning' first don't be surprised 'cuz it's not customary." And he said, "Oh, I didn't know that."
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> There's no word for good-bye. There's no word for hello. That is not in the Dene language. I don't think any Dene language has that in the Western Arctic. So that's something that they learned and of course we take it for granted. Those of us who speak both languages just take it for granted when people come that they would know these things and we shouldn't do that because they don't, and sometimes they're afraid to ask if they become offended.

Orality and Literacy

Oral Tradition

Unlike Euro-Canadian culture, which has developed a heritage of *literacy* through centuries of written ideas and concepts, Dene culture and tradition has survived and thrived through *oral* language transmission. Although the Dogrib language, along with the other northern Dene languages, is now written with a standardized orthography, since early times it has been an oral language. The Dogrib people are a community of story-tellers and story listeners. Mary Rose remarked, "Sometimes you sit with friends

and sometimes we ask questions, and that's when it's easy for us to get into a story. It's just natural. It comes naturally."

Dogrib history, tradition and values have been passed from generation to generation through direct teaching and through story-telling, the spoken repetition and interpretation of past events and of the age-old myths and legends. Orality is a treasured aspect of Dogrib culture. Rosalie described the beauty of the oral story-tellings as she compared them to the written stories that are now being recorded.

> There's quite a bit of traditional stories written down - written but it's not published yet. We just have them on papers and you know Mary, the language person, will print them out - print it out on the computer and give it to us. But I like it better when the elders tell it. It's so much better. I like the flow of the language, the body communications, and just the way they express themselves, the tone of voice and all that. I just love it. I'd rather have the elder tell me a story than have it read out. Or even to listen to the voice. I like listening to that.
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> I tried reading some stories from the computer, like the ones that Mary Siemens has given out. And I know most of the legend stories. But when I was reading it, it wasn't as beautiful as I was hoping it would be. So I still have to learn how to read out loudly, and practice more with it. As part of our spirituality legends and all that are really important. Because just - the other time I was telling you how the land is very sacred to us- legend is too. It is too. Legend has a lot of teaching in itself. So if young people would listen to a lot of legends that would teach them a lot of values. Our legends are very, very important.
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> So a lot of teachers should have elders in their classroom as much as they can for the legends, eh. They teach values and all that. It's really, really important. In the high school I notice that whenever we have an elder in the classroom an elder has full control of the classroom. Would never scold. Would never snap. Just sits there and tells stories. Not a peep sound in the classroom. In a lot of classes it's like that. Elders are very important still.

Story-Telling in the Classroom: Making Myth Relevant Today

Like other teachers, Mary Ann carries on the oral tradition of story-telling. Her students sit spell-bound as they listen to her stories of other times.

> I usually go out in the summer with my grandparents. You know, I came back from Ft. Smith and my parents they had a bad habit about drinking and leaving us alone most of the time. So that's the chance I had to go out with my grandparents, way down at the end of the lake called Marion Lake - past Marion Lake. We went there for fishing, eh. My grandfather and I we went to visit a net. He used a small canoe and I was sitting at the head of the canoe. I would just feel the water. My grandfather would say, "Get

> your hands out of the water. You never know what's in the water. Maybe there's a Bushman under the water. Might grab you, or drown you, or something like that." Things like that come in my mind once in a while, you know, and just little by little I will remember and I will talk to the students about it, and they get so interested they want more stories.

Rosalie also carries on that story-telling tradition in her role as teacher, teaching the old time stories as part of the students cultural heritage, and trying to make them relevant for the students in today's world.

> Even here now I still bring in a lot of cultural stuff in stories that I've heard, the myths that we have. And I always try to explain why did our people use the myths, the things that they believe in and how it (I don't have the word) - why it was necessary for them to use these myths. Just simple things like when summer came a lot of elders would tell their children that there's a Bushman around. In the out-lying communities even now that is still important. But you see in the past when people lived out on the land they needed their kids to behave in a certain way so that people didn't get hurt. And so by teaching - by telling the kids that there's a Bushman there it taught the kids to be very settled, not running around and misbehaving. They always had to behave in a certain way. If they didn't the parents would say, "There's a Bushman over there. Bushman will take you away." So it taught the kids to be very quiet and they needed to be very quiet out on the land.
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> And if we look at when - before Edzo and Akaitcho made peace between the Dogrib (the Chipewyan and the Dogrib) - it was really, really important to keep the kids quiet. Because if a child was screaming and crying in the teepee (if there's Chipewyan around you know) the Chipewyan will capture the people, eh, will kill them. So they always had to keep their kids very, very, very quiet. And they made sure kids didn't cry. And so that was a way of doing it, eh, saying, "There's a Bushman over there. The Bushman will take you." Kids kept very, very quiet. And kids didn't laugh out loudly and stuff like that. That was the purpose of that.
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> But now that we live in a house those things are not so necessary anymore - kids are protected, I guess, in a house. They'll be safe and sound. And they don't need to worry about somebody capturing them or - you know. So they don't use that anymore and - and because they don't use those as tools to teach their kids, I think a lot of parents are really confused about what they do - about what are they supposed to do. So for a lot of parents, raising kids has become very difficult task because they don't know how to deal with it. And also, a lot of kids they don't believe in Bushman or those things anymore. That's the way I see it. But when I teach the high school students I tell them about all these things, why these things were necessary. And why we don't need to use it now. But I also tell them, "But we still have to continue teaching our kids. We still have to continue having certain kind of rules that kids have to follow, you know, so that we're raising kids properly. That we teach them to have respect and all that - and values - certain values and we still have to keep up with."

Tying Together the Narrative Threads

Maintaining Connections with the Land

As the teachers recalled their memorable teaching experiences, vivid images of the land came into focus. They spoke of their own pleasure of taking the students out "on the land" and of the way in which the students' behaviours seemed to change in that outdoor setting. Often, to the surprise of teachers from southern Canada, a sense of harmonious interaction seemed to replace the harsh teasing, fighting and swearing that prevailed within the junior and senior high school settings. Older students displayed a politeness and maturity far beyond what they would normally show in their in-school classrooms.

Younger children were eager to help in setting up camp, assisting with clearing snow for the tent site, carrying supplies and firewood, helping to pitch camp and skinning and preparing the food animals caught in snares, nets and traps. Travelling by boat or skidoo, and under the direction of community elders, they learned traditional land skills: tracking and snaring rabbits, setting traps for muskrats, checking and replacing fish nets, skinning meat animals and preparing dry meat and dry fish. They learned about traditional plant uses and medicines. Putting aside their heavy consumption of modern "junk foods", they enjoyed their more traditional diet of caribou, muskrat, rabbit and bannock, and especially the "fish pipes" described by Mary Ann.

Some teachers encouraged their students to listen to the sound-filled *silence*, noting the quality of the silence of past years which was empty of the sounds of vehicles, chain-saws and skidoos. In these simple listening lessons we recognize again the Dogrib cultural connection to the natural landscape. We feel the value and beauty of the natural silence of the past and we detect a poignant sense of loss in the midst of modern "progress".

Strengths of the Dogrib Teachers

The earlier teacher graduates have served in a variety of roles in their school division as they try to discover the area in which they feel themselves to be most effective. They are highly supportive of each other, sharing information and concerns freely with one another. In addition, they exchange support and information with the non-Dogrib teachers with whom they work side by side. But they are aware of some of the built-in advantages they have over the teachers from southern Canada.

There is a cultural "comfort-zone" within their classrooms which arises naturally from their sharing of a common cultural heritage with their students. As members of the small, close-knit Dogrib communities they have an intimate knowledge of the cultural and social milieu in which the students have been raised. In addition, they have personal knowledge of the histories and circumstances of the extended families of the students. This allows them to have great empathetic understanding of their students' problems. Their fluency in the Dogrib language and knowledge of the culture allows them to communicate effectively with their students in ways that "outside" teachers cannot hope to do. Their identity as members of the Dogrib community promotes the early establishment of a trusting relationship between the students and the teachers. It also facilitates communication with the parents of their students.

There is a perception that the students in the school classrooms behave differently for the Dogrib teachers than they do for the "fly-in" southern teachers. The Dogrib teachers struggled to explain why this might be so. They suggested that the expectations of southern teachers might be "too high" for students who come to school with emotional problems. Students may come to school emotionally upset and frustrated, without having eaten, or with little sleep due to absences of parents who are gambling or drinking. When teachers are too hard on them they lash out angrily, causing teachers to lash out in return. In-School Suspensions often result from the conflict.

Language difficulties may cause problems between Dogrib students and southern teachers. Dogrib people in general enjoy friendly teasing. Student teasing is common and students are not hesitant to take advantage of the southern teachers' inability to understand the Dogrib language. Nora notes, "It's fun to defy the teacher. It's fun to break the rules and get away with it." A good sense of humour is a survival necessity.

Oral and written assignments may be poorly understood by the students due to their poor language skills. In addition, culturally different modes of verbal and non-verbal communication may confuse the messages that are exchanged between the students and their teachers. The inability to successfully complete classroom work or homework assignments leads to a steadily increasing frustration among the students. In time they may tune out and refuse to co-operate in the classroom or lash out angrily.

Primary Concerns of the Teachers

Within their stories, the teachers' focused much of their attention on teaching students ways of behaving respectfully toward one another. They spoke of their classrooms as safe places or as small, family or community settings, "second homes". Within the limited time period of the interview schedules, they did not speak much of the curriculum and subject-oriented or technical aspects of teaching: the passing on of informational facts, concepts and technical skills. This is, perhaps, a different orientation than that of many of the teachers from southern Canada. As noted in Chapter Two, Ong describes the major intent of communication within oral cultures as one of passing on ways of acting (or behaving), whereas the major intent of communication within literate cultures tends to be that of passing on information (1982, p.177). The Dogrib teachers' stories seem to fit that pattern.

Stories of discipline and classroom management continued the theme of teaching respect and caring within a community setting. Discipline methods concentrated heavily on "talking" to the students about their behaviour and teaching the students how to control

their behaviour and to express feelings and communicate with one another. The "limits" which were spoken of usually related to how the students treated one another. Consequences for going beyond the limits usually involved a form of "time out" but the application of the consequence was always followed by a time of talking about the unacceptable behaviour. Rosalie described at length the disciplinary process which she used with younger students. The focus of the talking was to help the student learn to understand and empathize with the feelings of those he or she had hurt. The process was not complete until harmonious relationships had been restored within the classroom, at the Kindergarten level through apologies and hugs. Using that process Rosalie consistently taught skills of conflict resolution and a process of reconciliation. Although she found it more difficult to apply that process at the high school level, talking to the students was still her preferred mode of responding to discipline problems.

Cross-Cultural Differences

A significant difference exists between Dogrib culture and southern Euro-Canadian culture in their ways of teaching and learning. Traditionally, Dogrib teaching or skill development took place in practical, concrete situations related to everyday life events. It followed a lengthy sequence of observation, demonstrations by those who had mastered the skill, opportunities for practice under the guidance of experts and finally opportunities for individual practice.

Southern Canadian ways of teaching stem, in part, from the rational-technical and scientific emphasis of our culture. Our teaching is often intellectual and abstract. Commonly, within our teaching practice, students are encouraged to experiment, to explore alternatives, to make hypotheses (or "guesses"), to test their hypotheses and to draw conclusions: in other words to "figure things out for themselves".

The Dogrib teachers have mentioned a tendency towards "perfectionism" in their students. It is a useful tendency within their traditional culture and promotes pride in

skilful accomplishments and fine workmanship. Within their traditional way of learning young people are assured of success. However, as a northern teacher, I have often experienced the total frustration of the students when they are encouraged to figure something out for themselves and their fear of not succeeding triggers an emotional reaction. They are not comfortable with "learning from their mistakes" as southern students are often counselled to do.

VI. Community Breakdown: The Problems it Creates for Teachers

Historical Background

A major concern expressed by all the Dogrib teachers is the social breakdown that is occurring in their communities. Those communities that are most isolated suffer less from it than the less isolated ones but it is present in all the Dogrib settlements to some degree. Louisa spoke of the events which have occurred, since the first contact with European people, which have contributed to the social breakdown presently being experienced in the community.

> Right now there's a lot of parents, the community people, that do need to address some sort of a healing process. Because the thing that I keep telling the police and other people and social services is that our people had gone through such a big change in such a short time. Our whole way of life has changed and a lot of the people haven't been able to deal with it. They haven't addressed it at all. And even the loss of the language! We're losing our language really fast.
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> There's a lot of things that the men had to do in the past. All that is taken away. There's really nothing to replace it. So they're gambling. They're doing all these things that they shouldn't be doing because of all this amount of leisure time that we have now. And a lot of them don't really have a hobby. Because when I look at the Dogrib people, my people, we were nomadic people where we went out on the land and we came back together in the summer time. But we never stayed in one place. And we never had a time to evolve where we were in one place where we work on our arts and we work on our music and work on all these craft things. We've never really had a chance to go through the process. We went from here right to there. And I think that's the reason why people don't really know what to do with all this free time that they have.
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> In some communities people like to do pottery or else they like to do reading or else they like to do music. In our community we don't really have things set up for people that have natural gifts. If you have music as your natural gift or else you have pottery or something to do where you can work with your hand, - you're an artist that can work with your hand - we don't really have somebody in the community that would help these children develop their talents. So, even though there are a lot of people in our community that are born with natural talents they never get to fully develop it. And somehow they never use it to the extent that they could have in other places.
>
> I think it's because that responsibility of education has been just taken; that a partnership didn't get started together. That was just taken away from them. That now, after so many years, the government knows that wasn't the right thing to do so they try to give it back to the parents. But the parents - it's going to take a while before that sense of responsibility, I think, comes back to them. A lot of the time it's always, "Oh, you're given money from the government to do that. Now you, you look after bussing so that my kid gets over there." And I think some of that is going to take time. But a lot of young parents are [responsible] (because they've grown up in a different generation) -

some of them take their kids over here, pick up their kids and you see more of that with some families.

And some families that are not at that stage yet will probably need a lot of support. Because the support in a traditional way was the support of everybody; grandparents, the community, relatives. So that there was always somebody talking to your child, either about their behaviour or else being a mentor for them. That there was somebody (if you have some sort of natural talent, either for Dene Medicine or else for hunting) then somebody (an uncle, or else if there was really good hunter) - then your parents would tell that hunter to take you out there so you learn to better the skills that you had. But now this system is so different that it's very hard for - for the parents to really know what their child is learning and what they are capable of doing. Because they don't really get a chance to practice a lot of the things that they're learning. It's just the way the society has emerged I guess.

It's not just in our community that a lot of the children are having problems. When I went to the conference in Toronto, where the principals were having the conference, one of the things that they said I think is really true is that the children in the past had a sense of responsibility and a role. Right now the role of the children has changed a lot, where you don't really need the children to do a lot of the things. Even on the farm the children always had a lot of work that they were involved in. And the role of going to the grandparents, helping out with grandparents, even that has changed because a lot of the grandparents are either at the old folks home or else they're in a different town altogether.

Inter-Generational Conflicts

The rapid changes that have occurred in the Dogrib communities have resulted in a problem of communication between the older generation and the younger one. In some instances grandchildren can no longer understand the language of their grandparents. In addition, younger people have grown up in very different circumstances than their elders did and they struggle with explaining their own changing lifestyle to their parents, grandparents and other older people of the community. Older people become frustrated when the younger generation does not behave in "the right way".

Marriage customs are among the practices that have changed greatly in the last few decades. Traditionally marriages were arranged by the parents and young girls often married at an early age so that their families would be assured that there would be someone to hunt for them and to care for them in the future. Rosalie reflected on the changes in thinking as she spoke about her own experiences.

When I was growing up my father always used to say, "You're going to get married to one of those old guys" - to one of those old widowers. And I would get really upset

about it. And I would just get mad. And my father said, "Well, you don't have any choice do you? You're a woman, and you're to get married. You're going to get married to one of those old guys who will teach you a lot of good lessons, and whip you and all that." And I used to get really upset and one time I spoke back to my father.

There was this old guy that lived in the community. Like, he's never been married but my goodness, he's old enough to be my grandpa. [*laughter*] But my father always used to say, "You're going to marry him," and sometimes my father would joke around with that guy and say, "You're going to marry my oldest daughter here." And he took it serious so he would come around the house a lot, just about every night, some days even twice a day. It really bothered me. Boy, I hated it.

When he came to the house I wouldn't even look at him. Sometimes my Mom would say, "Give him some tea." and I just - you know - like, whenever people come in you have to give tea. I just absolutely refused to give him tea. But one time my father was joking about it and I got really upset. I said, "I'm not going to marry anybody I don't want to." I spoke my mind. And I said, "I don't have to marry if I don't want to. I can always go away, go to school and live on my own." And he said, "You have such a mouth. You're such a big mouth." He said that to me, my father.

He said, "You're going to marry one of these old men so that they can teach you a lot of good lessons. You need to be taught good lessons." And he said (when he was talking about himself in his young days) - he said, "When I was young, whenever a woman got married that's what the parents would say" - the parent of the girl. They would say, "Teach her a lesson until she can serve you the way you want to be served." Like a slave, you know. Boy, I didn't like that. Anyway, my father used to say things like that and I would get upset.

Later, Rosalie stressed that her father's joking about her marriage to an older man was a form of teaching about appropriate ways of behaving. Speaking of herself she said, "It was not appropriate for a young Dogrib woman to be so outspoken."

Anna also described her father's difficulty with accepting some of the new ways with regards to women's roles in the community. Recently he asked her, "How come we haven't seen you with any other guy?" She explained that when he was young people had no choice about getting married, and girls married at an early age. It was the parents' decision and fathers were anxious to make sure that their daughters would be well cared for. Anna told her dad that she was not ready for a relationship yet, saying, "I have other things I need to take care of first." Her dad had married when he was fifteen and told her, "I just want to see you in a good hand. We're not going to be with you a long time." She explained to her Dad that it has changed since the old days; that she needed four to six years yet to finish her education. But she promised, "I will be sure to be in a good hand

before you are gone." "Nowadays", she commented, "everything is new. It is hard for my Dad, but my Mom understands OK."

The Generation Gap

The loss of good communication between the older people and the students who are now growing up has resulted in a loss of the traditional ways of controlling and influencing the young people. New situations call for new guidelines, and many parents of teenagers are at a loss to know how to reconcile the old ways with the new ways. Mary Ann described the situation.

> There's a lot of kids in the school here - like, I know their folks and some of them they got kicked out of school. They got kicked out because of their attitude towards the teacher, eh. Things like that. And you know, there were kids they were - like, being pushed away: "You're not good," you know. There was one kid that was in a (what do you call it?) juvenile home, something like that, or foster home in Smith. And he came back. He came back to school. And the kids called him that, jailbird, called him all kinds of names and he got mad so he - he swore or he did something so he got kicked out.
>
> And he came to my class. Every once in a while he'll poke his head in and find his way in, eh, and sits with the crowd. I just let him be. I just keep my eyes open and his teacher will be at the door. I say, "Go away." So you know, that kid was OK for a while. Then I didn't see him for a while. He said he got kicked out. But this kid, you know, he had a problem.
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> His Mom is really mean and always putting him down, "You can't do this. You can't do that," you know. But if they didn't talk to him like that maybe he'll be different, eh? But it's just her tone of voice, the way she talks to him, so - "He's got to be what he is," I said. But she comes and sees me, like at home, and she says, "If you see my son, talk to him, you know. Give him a pep talk," or something like that. So I would do that. He was - he was OK.

Rosalie discussed the need for new forms of discipline and guidance.

> When I talk about disciplining kids you can see all these faces of these parents, you know, frowning. And you know, they look at you with shock. And after a time I said, "Well look. Disciplining kids doesn't mean spanking them. Or, you know, you don't need to beat up your kids or anything like that. There are all different ways of disciplining kids. When you're disciplining your child, you're teaching them to have a better self-control. Because if they have absolutely no control, you know, I just can't see your kids learning in school or being able to function properly in the community. I just can't see it if your kids are really out of control."
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> Look at some of these high school students we have who are out of control. I said, "Against that we have to teach our kids to have some kind of self-control right

now. And we have to start at home when kids are very, very little. But it doesn't mean we have to be mean and hard and, you know, spanking them and all that. It doesn't mean that."

And I would tell them some of the things that they can do, you know. Like if the kids aren't behaving (maybe if kids are fighting in the house) and you don't want them to fight anymore but you don't know what to do, you just send them off into their room. You just give them a "time out". Or let them sit some place where you can keep an eye on them and talk to them quietly about their behaviour. And just little stuff like that.

But a lot of these younger parents - well a lot of the students that I've dealt with were very young you know, like grade one or grade two, kindergarten, about that age - so whenever I have problems I will just go and visit with the parents and talk to them quietly, you know. And tell them what kind of problem I'm having with their kids. And I also would offer my help, you know, and say, "If you need my help on anything I can help you out." Or if they ask for ideas or suggestions I would help them out with that. I've done a lot of that.

Changing Roles of Women

Although the Dogrib teachers value much of their cultural heritage there are aspects of it that some feel are in need of change. Most of the Dogrib teachers currently working in the Division's schools are women. Some of them feel strongly that women must have freedom to make non-traditional choices and to be recognized for their ability and their achievements. Nora expressed the feeling with passion.

One thing I've noticed is most of the teachers are all women!

She paused then to gather her thoughts before going on to speak forcefully (although with an apologetic smile and an accompanying chuckle).

And Dogrib men are male chauvinist pigs! They don't believe that a woman can hold a high ranking title. So that's one of the reasons, I guess, our Dogrib teachers who are women don't get the full respect and the full support that they need behind them. While if you went into the classroom where there is a white teacher they get that. Because that's how education always was to them. So we need to get rid of that somehow and tell the people how valued our aboriginal teachers are.

I remember some guys telling me, "Oh!" when I said, "If we had a Dogrib person who was qualified to run for Directorship of the Divisional Board, and she was a woman, would you guys give it to her?" They said, "No. No Dogrib woman can hold that kind of a job." But a white woman can. So that's there. So a lot of it has to do with the respect, I guess, or the value that they hold, and I guess they don't understand the value that aboriginal teachers have. And the belief (I believe) is that white people are always superior. They're always looked up to. And so it's still there. And that needs to go away, and especially among the men.

Rosalie commented on her perception of the slowly changing roles occurring among some of the younger Dogrib women.

> Like right now, when I look at a lot of my friends, like my girlfriends my age (even out in the communities) - when I look at them I notice that a lot of them are very, very traditional. Things that are going on in the community that they don't agree with, when there's meetings they're really hesitant to speak. And they're also afraid that they might be put down by the men.
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> And often time I would say, "Come on you guys, just stand up. Stand up for what you believe in" and "Stand up on your own two feet. What is word? It's only word. You know, if they say anything or try anything it's only words. Don't be afraid of it. You've gotta fight for what you believe in." but a lot of them are hesitant to do it. Even here, eh? Even here. Like, we live so close to Yellowknife but still a lot of young women are still very hesitant to speak their mind. But we do have a lot of powerful women here too that encourage each other a lot. We give each other a lot of support. And it does help. It does help.

Effect of Social Instability on the Schools

The high level of social disruption which is occurring in the Dogrib communities, (as it is in other aboriginal communities in Canada) is reflected in the problems children bring with them when they attend school. Rosalie described the situation.

> A lot of time students are coming to school with a lot of problems that they carry with them, you know. Because we have an unhealthy community with lots of addictions, a lot of abusive problems that students are coming to school with. In the beginning of the year some of these students will come to school full of anger, a lot of resentment feelings, a lot of pain and all that. And they're just attacking, slashing. Other kids are just hitting, kicking, swearing, and really, really angry people.

All of the teachers have had experiences of teaching students who have been hurt by the social disruption prevalent in the communities. Mary Ann talked about the lone boy in her sewing class.

> Well, this kid was kicked out first semester, I think. Like, he's not from Ft. Rae, eh. But he chose that sewing thing. Now he's having second thoughts, eh. But the counsellor said he has to be in there. Yesterday he said, "I don't know if I'm gonna make it. Those girls they're laughing at me," he said. I said, "No. Don't be like that. Even guys they get to do things like that for a living," I said. "You know, once you get your skills, and hands into sewing - you finish it, you get your one credit." With the beadwork, if he's done, he gets one credit. But then they put the whole thing together. Like, for the mitts they have to stitch it together, make a yarn (that's string ties) and all that. So, "Just stick with us," I said. But he's shy, like. But he chose that course so he has to do it.

> Like him, he was bad so they let him go for a while in the past, I think. But his parents and his Mom they had their ups and downs, I know that. But he can try to be himself and try to improve in his self-esteem with other students and teachers. That's what I told him. He's doing it for himself. He's not doing it for anybody else.

Anna described a child in her primary class who had great difficulty adjusting to being in school. At first he would sit on a box just inside the door but he wouldn't come in. After a while he would go to his desk but he would often be under his desk. Anna later removed the box from the door but he found a place between two cabinets to sit. When she put something there he found another table to sit under.

She explained that she did not use strong force to make him go to his desk but encouraged him to do so. When he was ready he would sit down. She would tell him what he should do and praise him as much as she could. She reflected on his difficulty accepting physical touch. Initially she would give him a hug but when she did that he pushed her away. Even when she patted his shoulder he would flinch and turn away.

At times he would say, "I don't want to go to school. I don't want to work." Anna would say, "OK. It's up to you. I can't force you to do it. But I'm very happy when you're here." He would go out and stay in the foyer for eight or ten minutes. Then he would come back and knock softly on the door. She would say, "OK. It's up to you. If you're ready you can come to school." She praised him in front of the class, observing that when she did she could see on his face that he felt like, "I'm a big man." At first he would not join in the sharing circle but just stay by himself. Anna noted that little by little, however, he began to come and listen to the other children talk.

Rosalie too described how she was able to work with children whose behaviour was very difficult to deal with in the classroom.

> One of the most difficult ones I've had was a student who came to school and his parents had broken up. His father had raised him and his father is really into drinking. And it was more of an anger problem. He was just full of anger and whenever anything triggered his feelings he would explode. That was going on. And a lot of it - and a lot of his behaviour was related to his father's drinking. And his father wasn't willing to discipline his son or do anything at home with his son. I approached the father regarding the little boy's behaviour. Father says, "Well, I don't have any problem with him. I'm not going to deal with him."

And so it was really difficult because some days (especially for Mondays and Tuesdays and also on Friday, Thursday and Friday) - I watched his behaviour some days, you know. Whenever he knows that his father will be out drinking his behaviour just triggers. And also a lot of Mondays (because usually father drinks on the weekends) - on Monday that little guy comes to school, he's just frustrated. He's angry. And you know, within the classroom sometimes kids will get on each other's back, you know. Tease each other, call names, and stuff like that. When that happened, my goodness, this little guy would just explode like crazy. One thing they always teased him about - his father - like, his father has a Dogrib name, and they would pick on his father's name and he doesn't like that. Whenever that happened he would just throw a tantrum.

And when he throws a tantrum I always have to keep an eye on him to make sure he's not hurting people. Because he can just pick up a chair and throw right across the room. Or else he'll just grab a desk and throw the desk over. That's how powerful - that's how much anger he has in him - just a six year old kid. And it was just unreal. And I don't believe in sending him to office for that behaviour problem. Because, gee, if you send an angry kid to office what good is it if the anger's not dealt with?

So after a while I had to reorganize and - and reset my whole classroom environment and have a "time out" for him. Within that area I had to make sure there was nothing that could damage him; that could hurt him or he could hurt anybody else with. So I had to really reorganize and set up my classroom properly for him. Because his anger was exploding a bit too much. And when that happens he would go and hit, kick, scratch, pull hairs, grab people and just throw them, you know, across the room type of thing. And he was really a powerful little kid, just full of anger.

But one thing I noticed, he didn't know how to express himself. So finally, after a while, whenever he throw a tantrum I always made sure I had extra worksheets available for my class. So whenever he was angry I just gave them all a sheet and I would say, "OK, you guys work on this for a few minutes. I will be back with you." And I will take that little guy and take him to the quiet area. And I can't just leave him there by himself so usually I would do a "Sit and Hold" with him. And I would let him sit on my lap and I would hold his arm (cross his arm and hold it like this) otherwise he would scratch, you know. And also put his leg between my leg, and I held him like that.

And I would let him cry and cry and he'd just be fighting off - you know, he was such a powerful little guy. And I would just let him cry and I would talk to him. I said, "OK, who are you mad at? Are you mad at me . . .? Are you mad at me?" And I would say things like that. He says, "No, no. I'm not mad at you teacher. I'm not mad at -" and he just kept talking and talking, you know. And after a while he said, "I'm mad at my Dad. I hate him. I hate him." And I would say, "Who do you hate? Who do you hate?" And he says, "I hate my Dad." I would say, "Why do you hate your Dad?" "He's always drinking" - on weekends like Friday or Saturday. "When he drinks I have to walk around with him all night and when he's having party with his friends I have to be with him."

So a lot of stuff like that was coming out from that little guy. And we kept at it. We kept at that, the sitting and holding thing for the longest time. I don't know, maybe for about two months, before I can actually let him sit and talk about his feelings. Then I noticed that this throwing tantrums simmered down a lot, you know - it really, really slowed down to a point where he was doing only once a month at a time. And I also set an area, - like I had a sofa like this in my class, away from the group work you know , and I made a deal with him. I said, "Look, whenever you have any kind of feelings - when you think you're getting angry or upset or if you think you're gonna hit someone,

why don't you go and sit on that sofa. As soon as you sit on the sofa I will come to you and we will talk." He says, "Yes."

So after a while, whenever kids are picking on him or when kids are teasing him he'd just go over there and I will go to him and we sit and talk about it. And it got to the point where he was really expressive - like learned to talk about his feelings. Like, "I'm angry" and "I'm hurt." "I'm really tired." "I'm sad." "I'm happy." You know, "I'm excited." All these words started coming out. And when that happened he really simmered down. And by April, May - by May I would say, he was able to sit down for a good half an hour to do his work, whereas when school started in August - in September, I couldn't get him to do any work at all. Nothing at all. So that was a real - a real progress for that little guy.

Tying Together the Narrative Threads

The decline in fluency in the Dogrib language is a significant factor in the instability that can be seen in the communities. The increase of southern Canadian influence in the Northwest Territories has had a profound impact on the native languages. Television from southern Canada has been one of the powerful impacts which has contributed to the decline of native language fluency. When I moved to the first small Dogrib community in which I taught, the television satellite arrived in the same month that I did. When I first arrived all of the children who were beginning school were fluent in Dogrib and spoke only a little English. By my third year of teaching in that community the new children entering kindergarten understood some Dogrib but they did not speak it. They preferred to speak in English. This rapid change was being experienced throughout the school division, much of it, I believe, as a result of the introduction of television.

Younger parents were beginning to speak to their children more in English than in Dogrib, sometimes hoping that schooling would be easier for the children if they were fluent in English. Unfortunately, as the Dogrib teachers described, the younger students now appear to be weak in both languages, often using a hybrid form of speaking containing elements of both languages. Their oral language skill in both languages is poorly developed which, in turn, creates problems for them in learning to read and write. This creates severe learning problems in all areas of the curriculum. It is a major difficulty within the public education system.

The loss of fluency in the native language has also contributed to the social breakdown in the Dogrib communities. Many children are no longer able to learn about their own cultural heritages from their grandparents because of the language loss. The fine nuances of language which contain the subtle understandings of the cultural heritage are no longer understood by the younger generation. Nora describes the elders' language as "University" level, far beyond the "slang" or "baby talk" of the younger members of the community. Communication between generations has become much more difficult. Children and grandparents have grown up in vastly different social environments with different understandings of values and appropriate ways of thinking and acting.

New circumstances require new solutions. The parents of the small community in which I taught were asked how they used to handle the kinds of problems we were experiencing with the students. In unison they replied, "We didn't have these kinds of problems in the past." The new circumstances make it difficult for parents and elders to practice their traditional ways of managing the behaviour of their children. Traditional ways seem to have maintained a complex balance between control, influence and respect for individual autonomy (the right of each person to make important decisions for themselves) (Scollon and Scollon, 1981).

As Rosalie pointed out, and as many of the teachers' stories of early experiences illustrate, high expectations were maintained for children with regards to helping the family and following the advice and guidance of elders. But southern teachers are often puzzled by Dogrib parents seeming unwillingness to exert strong influence on their children with regards to bed times, getting to school on time and regular attendance, etcetera. Dogrib parents, on the other hand, seem to find the ways of southern Canadians to be too intrusive or harsh and controlling to be acceptable to them.

The change from a nomadic, hunting, gathering lifestyle to a wage based economy and a community centred lifestyle has resulted in changing roles for both men and women. Women now hold many of the full-time jobs in the community, giving them an economic

independence which they did not experience in the past. Within a money economy the traditional practice of sharing resources communally is more difficult to maintain. These factors contribute to the loss of social stability in the communities.

There are countless stories that could be told in the Northwest Territories about students with problems. The stories of students with such severe problems, told by the Dogrib teachers, vividly portray the tragic nature of the community breakdown which is found in Aboriginal communities as the result of the impact of colonialism on their traditional way of life. These stories dramatically illustrate the immense difficulty of being a teacher in those communities. It is particularly difficult in northern Canada where the change from a hunting and gathering lifestyle to a global, technological one has occurred in such a short time span, essentially fifty to sixty years.

The tragedy is offset by the many individual successes the Dogrib teachers described in working with children with severe problems. It is also offset by the strong combined efforts of the Government of the Northwest Territories, visionary educational administrators, and the many dedicated and caring teachers who have worked hard, and continue to do so, to improve the situation for the Dogrib and other northern people. But the problems remain acute. Much work remains to be done, and the Dogrib teachers are among those who struggle to define educational and community priorities which will address the many problems they face.

VII. Looking Ahead: Finding a Path Between Two Cultures

The Challenge: Preservation of Cultural Identity and the Dogrib Language

Loss of Language and Tradition

The rapid changes being experienced in their communities lie at the centre of the questions the Dogrib teachers must struggle with on a daily basis. While they are very much aware of the changing nature of the culture to which they belong, the Dogrib teachers are deeply committed to the retention of a strong cultural identity for their communities. They struggle with questions of how to preserve their language, values, oral heritage and traditions in the midst of rapid changes, and of how to make their teaching of those cultural understandings relevant to the students living in today's world.

Rosalie told of her struggles to teach about the traditional culture in ways that would be meaningful to her students today.

> It's really hard to teach culture. Like, for me it's really hard; for me to get my point across to students when you talk about going out on the land and living traditional style and all that. Because it's really difficult for them to visualize it a lot of time. So as a Dogrib teacher I want to teach my culture but a lot of time it's really, really difficult. So I always teach the culture as what went on long ago; you know, the cultural activities that they had going, like going out on the land to hunt or trap, or the route - the certain route that they had to follow; setting traps, going fishing, making fish net. All that stuff like that. It's really difficult to teach it, eh.
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> So I always refer to that as *t'akwe whaa*, like long ago. But I try to teach the values as much as I can. The values, you know, are very, very important, like teaching respect, patience, sharing, caring. Because a lot of those values are still being practised in the community, you know. And those are very, very important for us to continue having.

Louisa emphasized the value of preserving the Dogrib cultural identity.

> We need to preserve our identity of who we are and to be really, really proud of who we are. And I think if you really know who you are then you can go forward. A lot of the things that some of the children I know are having some sort of conflict over is probably because of a lot of the text books and materials that we have in the school that are not of our culture. And whatever is of our culture doesn't really reflect how life can be wonderful. If you just look around at the clothes we wear and the words coming out of our mouth they all reflect somebody else's culture.
>
> And so for us to do well for ourself I think we really need to say, "Yes, I'm a Dogrib person. This is my language. This is what my parents have said." We're not

> trying to say, "Everybody go back on the land. Everybody live the way our ancestors did." That's not what we're trying to tell them. We're trying to tell them, "You're a Dogrib person. You have something to contribute to the society. You have all this knowledge that our elders have about the land." And they learned that through observation and through knowledge being handed down. And they're not going to find it in any of the encyclopedias or books at all. So that the youngsters and a lot of people need to visit those elders and to really talk with those elders and just learn a lot of who they are.

Several of the teachers expressed apprehension that the Dogrib language was in danger of being lost. Rosalie was asked if she was hopeful that the language could be kept fluent.

> How hopeful I am? I'm getting scared. Because a lot of kids are losing their language. When you're talking about language, right now when I talk to my students, they have modern language. What I mean is that they have language that they can use within the community. That's it! They talk about going to store. They're talking about boyfriend or girlfriend and who says this and who says that; just enough to survive in the community with. But if you're talking about other cultural activities in the classroom they don't have the proper language for it; like going on a portage, canoe trip, they don't have the proper language for it. So they have a difficult time communicating when we're teaching about land skills and stuff like that.
>
> So if parents don't do anything about this I think kids will lose their language. Because right now I think, at the primary level, most of the kindergarten kids that come to school, most of them are fluent English speakers. A few of them are broken languages. Last year, when I looked at the kindergarten class, the morning students that came to school were very fluent in English. But we taught them Dogrib. And the kids that came to school in the afternoon their language was very broken, where if you spoke to them in only English they couldn't understand. And them they couldn't speak straight English or they didn't understand straight Dogrib, so they mixed up the language. There's always this mixture of it. So they're not strong in straight Dogrib or they're not strong in straight English.
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> So if parents don't do anything about it I think we're going to lose our language. And that really saddens me. 'Cuz if we lose our language what do we have to hang on to. 'Cuz we lost our culture, a lot of us. Well, we didn't lose it but we don't use it. But these young people wouldn't have their culture any more and it's possible a lot of them will lose their legends, their histories because those are not practised outside of school. So, it scares me.

Mary Ann too expressed the fear that the language and traditional culture were being lost.

> It's gonna be going. But the way of life, the way people are living now, like with hunting, I'm scared for animals around our area now. 'Cuz of all that mining around our area. There's diamond mine. There's gold mine. And it's all surrounding our area and we're right in the middle.
>
> Maybe, within twenty years from now, maybe the animals won't survive. They'll be all sick. Twenty years from now maybe people won't go hunting. Maybe we'll

be like a Reserve here. We can't even set our net in the lake and things like that. And - I don't know. It's a real worry. But Ft. Rae is right here, and Snare Lake, Yellowknife, Lac La Martre. And toward Snare Lake there's mines out there. And all the water passes through us. Maybe the water too it will be polluted.

But the language it's slowly dying. The young ones they hear it but they can't speak it. Like my two little ones, one of them can speak pretty good - not too good. She's only three years old but she understands. When I talk to her in Dogrib she understands all. And my little boy too he understands Dogrib but he doesn't speak it. Every time he try to speaks it, it comes out funny. He laughs with himself.

Importance of Dogrib Language Retention

Nora explained how important she feels it is to retain the Dogrib language as a fluent language.

Oh, I feel it's very important. We're not lucky like the French. They can go to France and learn French or the German people can go to Germany or Italians can go to Italy. We don't have that option if we lose our language. We lose it, - we lose it! And to me that's very, very scary.

All the Dene languages are a land based language. So we're not out on the land anymore, or not as much, so a lot of the words that the elders use we don't know what they're talking about. I had my students tell me, "I can't understand what the elders are saying. Their Dogrib is too hard." So, in other words, the elders they're speaking University Dogrib. And our kids are learning slang. So, it's hard for them to visualize exactly what the elders are talking about, or break down a word of what it means and all these things. So I think it's very important that - we need to use our elders to find the words, plus we need to take the kids out on the land and show them what they're actually talking about. 'Cuz I think if you don't experience something then it's too hard to learn what is actually being taught.

I heard an elder, Elizabeth MacKenzie, saying, "If you lose your language you lose your culture. And if you lose your culture you're just like a white man." So, in other words, I don't think she was putting down the white society. What she's saying is that it doesn't make a difference after that. Because you don't have - you don't have any identity. You don't know who you are.

I went to a conference once and a Native guy from B.C. (I can't remember his name now but he was a professor anyway) said he went through the whole education system. He said he went from being a native person to being non-native. And he said when he went through it was like a funnel, except he went through it backwards. So he went in the narrow part as a native person and he came out and he exploded, because he had no identity. He didn't know who he was.

I had another person who - he's a native. He's Dogrib. He married a white lady and she moved south and so he moved with her. And he said he lost his identity and he didn't know who he was. And when his children started asking him he said he couldn't give them any answers. So he had to come back and relearn all over again - of who he was.

I had an older lady tell me this too and a lot of it has to do with language and culture. And she said, "When our native girls marry white men we don't mind. Because the mother rears the children, and she takes all her qualities, her culture and everything, and that's what she teaches her children. And she'll take the good qualities that the father has, and that's how their children are raised. So those kids can be raised, you know, fairly strong human beings. But when a native guy marries a white woman, he doesn't give his qualities to his kids, because everything that he's learned, he's learned out on the land. He doesn't do that. So his children are not raised with his culture." And I thought that was very interesting, because in those situations that's where the language is being lost. Because usually they - that's why the call it "mother tongue". They learn from their mothers.

Need for Community Involvement in Language Retention

Parents sometimes express a preference for having their children study only English in school. Nora discussed the community's part in the challenge of preserving the Dogrib language.

I think the community needs to understand the importance of what the whole Dogrib language is all about: how we're trying to implement it in the schools through bi-lingual program; through Dene Kede; through it being offered as optional courses in high school. I think if the community knows the importance of it then I think it'll make a difference. But now they just don't.

First of all we really have to make the community know how important it is. When I talk to parents about what education is, to them it's reading, writing and math, that's it. They believe when their children come to school they send their kids to school and these are the skills their kids are going to come out with. And so I've had - we've had parents say, "No, I don't want my child to learn Dogrib." But I don't think they understand the importance of them having a strong first language when they come to school. And if it's Dogrib then the transition (because they already have the oral component of it) - it wouldn't be so hard for them just to switch it over into English, to learn it.

But that's not happening. We're having kids that are coming that are limited in both languages, which makes it even more limited. So I think it has to be a community awareness thing. It has to be something that all the communities want. It has to be regionalized and we need to see more people using both languages to their advantage I think, in whatever job or whatever their employment is. So that young people will understand, yes, it's important for me to speak both languages, not just learn English so I can get a job.

Different Regional Dialects

Nora described the complications involved in teaching the Dogrib language which arise from the many different dialects of Dogrib which are found in the various communities.

> I think one of the things that we're afraid of doing (I know I was) was, "I'm going to say the wrong word, or say it the wrong way." And the parents are going to say that I'm not teaching the children properly. So one thing we need to make parents aware is there are different dialects. Even in the community of Rae, *fork* was a perfect example It's three words for *fork*: three different parts of Rae; three different interpretations for the same word. So I think if the parents realize that we take the elders' word and use that, and then these are the other dialect words that people use. I think if they understand that concept - it'll make a difference.
>
> It's like the English language. They say *project/project* with two different pronunciations, you know - *schedule* and *schedule*. It's spelled the same, said differently, means the same thing. And I think we need to do that with the Dogrib language, so parents aren't saying, "Well she doesn't know how. She doesn't speak it properly. How is she teaching the kids?" Or, "She speaks with this dialect." So I think those sorts of things are important.
>
> It's been standardized. I know that. But the thing is, though, that we need to get all the people that are readers and writers of Dogrib, who are teaching it , (and I'm not only talking in the schools. I'm talking like, everybody that uses it for whatever employment they have) - they have to know that this is the standardized version of it and everybody uses it universally. Because that's not happening. So things that are being printed in Yellowknife in Dogrib and coming back to us, kids are saying, "This is spelled wrong." And the kids are picking up on this, those who have gone through a high school program of reading and writing. And because of that sometimes kids are not interested in reading it.

Concerns of the Elders

Louisa emphasized that loss of the Dogrib language would mean an accompanying loss of many of the cultural concepts inherent in the language; concepts which had enabled the people to survive together on the land for centuries.

> There's so much knowledge in the Dogrib language that's related to the land. If you learn the language you learn more about the animals and the land, the land in which you're supposed to survive. Because this is a really harsh land. Our people have lived on it over thousands and thousands of years and have been able to survive even without going through formal education.

She added a pensive and sombre comment on the view of some of the elders regarding the seriousness of the current educational situation for some of the young Dogrib students of today.

> But now a lot of the elders are saying, "All these kids that go through the school system, but they still come out without either skills to survive on the land or else the work skills that they need." So there's something missing probably in the system and also in the community.

Some Possible Solutions: The Path Between Two Cultures

Becoming "Strong Like Two People"

It is a major challenge for the Dogrib teachers to find the passage between their two cultures: to build a bridge between the best of their historical Dogrib culture with its strong oral tradition and the unavoidable mainstream culture of rapid technological advancement. It is the challenge that was presented to them in past years by the respected elder, Chief Jimmy Bruneau (*Kw'atindee Bino*): to provide a school which will allow the Dogrib children to become "strong like two people".

> I have asked for a school to be built . . . on my land . . . and that school will be run by my people, and my people will work at that school and our children will learn both ways, our way and the whitemen's way (Chief Jimmy Bruneau, 1971, cited in *Strong Like Two People,* 1991, p. iii.).

Louisa explained the necessity for developing and extending the students' knowledge of their own language and culture.

> And [for culture] they can alternate some of the things that they've done. Because one of the things that I would really like to put into our curriculum is dancing; a lot of the tea dances that we have. I was at a tea dance when I was younger. The younger generations have changed a little bit of the steps. Now with this generation being more energetic than a lot of us [*chuckle*] I think that they can add a little bit of different steps to their music. And these are the kind of things we can do. It lives on if you just keep adding to it, just like the language.
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> The language has changed a lot from the time our ancestors were using it but if it's changing that means it's OK. That means it's alive. It's being used. And if they're finding words for *computers* which we never ever had and then they're using it in Dogrib then that means that language is still very important.

Rita commented on the importance of parents and professionals modelling the use of the Dogrib language whenever possible.

> I've been focusing on the Dogrib language with the parents and with the school staff whenever we give workshops. That's why when I do a presentation I do it in Dogrib. Because I want them to be aware of the language. Our language is very important and without knowing our language we have no identity.
>
> So that's what I've been trying to tell the people. But it's hard, if you're not going to support it at home. There's no - the support is not there. We can do so much in school but we can't give all that we want for the younger people. [They need] to know their history and their language. To know who they are; especially to know the land base, the culture. We want more cultural activities too.

Funding, Personnel and Resources

Rita continued to speak of the need for cultural activities, emphasizing the need for more funding, personnel and resources for cultural activities.

> Cultural activities can be done in the communities by setting up some organizations but it's just that people are not available or there's no funding in place. That's a problem. If we had a good resource person in school that person could give the kind of programs and the kind of resources that we need to support the program. [We need] a qualified Dogrib instructor. A person that's really strong in teaching the language and is committed to the program and is committed to give a lot of their time to the students and to the community.
>
> And a lot has to be taught at home too. Our language has to be taught at home in the community. And in the leadership role a lot of support has to come from them too. Because in a lot of communities and places people are losing their language really fast and we see it now because of the TV's and all those technologies. But it's got to be supported at home very strongly. Especially in the communities.

Nora asked for strong Divisional Board support for promoting community understanding of the need for passing on the Dogrib language and the cultural heritage to the younger generation.

> I guess it's going to have to be a mandate from the Divisional Board to not only fight for it in the school but it has to come out of the school and go into the community somehow. I know maybe that's something they need to do, orientation with kindergarten teachers, kindergarten parents, parenting skills. I don't know. But I know there's lots - get a group of people together and they can give ideas and then work something from there.

Dogrib Immersion Classes

Nora envisioned the possibility of Dogrib immersion classes for the young children who are now entering school without any foundation in Dogrib, suggesting that the bi-lingual program is now inadequate to meet some of the children's needs for learning the language.

> There's a bi-lingual program in place but I don't really know how much of it is being done. I can't say. But I do know one teacher is in the bi-lingual class with her grade two/three. And I do know that from Kindergarten to grade three they do have slotted areas where they just teach Dogrib to the kids. But to me that's not enough. And I think there's enough qualified people to do Dogrib immersion classes.

Increased Print Resources

A number of the teachers spoke of the need for increased Dogrib language resource materials, particularly for the older students. Nora spoke of the work that had already been done but suggested that still more is needed.

> The other thing too is we need to print what people say. We need to have more printed material. That's a must if we want to have an immersion program. We just do have enough printed material. And we get high school kids to write books and that, make poems and all these things but even that is still not enough. All the books that have been translated - there's just not enough material.

Rosalie, too, spoke of the need for additional Dogrib language materials for the high school students, as well as the chance to learn more about appropriate ways of working with adult learners.

> As a Dogrib teacher right now I would like to have more resource materials (like teaching materials in Dogrib) because we don't have enough for senior highs. All these years we worked on primary. We got a lot of material together for primary but we don't have a whole lot on senior highs. Really nothing. So I would like to see the Dogrib Divisional Board focusing on senior high for a change.

> A lot of those students that are in Dogrib class right now - a lot of them are struggling with their reading. But I'm not an adult educator, so it's kind of difficult. I have to scramble for things to do all the time. I need help with that and also to have more resource materials. Because, you know, to these older sixteen, seventeen, eighteen year old students I have (some of them are even nineteen to twenty) if you give them one of these little kiddie books for them to read, you know, how would they feel? So we may have a lot of good resource materials but we need stuff for older students.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Louisa reflected on the kind of community development that is needed for the students in today's world.

> Right now I've got a meeting with the chief and with the hamlet. I've been telling them that the children really need something in the evening from four o'clock 'til nine or ten. They have all this free time. What are they doing? Where is the language development happening? Where are they practising what they are learning at the school, their reading and their oral language? Where is it happening? Where's the social skills that they should be learning if there's nothing in place in the community after school or if the parents are still working? And the parents themself also need to have a leisure time where adults can get together and have a really good time and just be able to go home and relax. Where? Right now we don't have that set up.
>
> One of the things that I keep telling the people in the community is that when I look at our people it's just like they're here but they're ready to just leave to go back out in the bush and do what they're supposed to. If this is - if Rae is the place where we're going to spend the rest of our lives then we should be looking forward to doing different things that would benefit all of us and benefit the community. When I look at it it's a slow process, very slow process I think, for a people to go through.
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> And even looking at the land, the way the community's set up, the hamlet really needs to make sure that there's enough space for the families to have a real nice area for their kids to play. And there are different things that need to be done in the community. And one of the things that I keep telling them is we need to really work on our recreation. We need to work on the facilities in the community so there is things for the Moms and the children to do; for the Dads and the children to do; for the Mom and Dad to do things; which we don't really have in this community. Not yet anyway.

Further Education and Professional Development

As a Dogrib language teacher Lena has felt a need for more knowledge of how to write the language. She expressed the need for all the Dogrib language teachers to continue having courses to increase their knowledge of Dogrib literacy as well as the need for more Dogrib materials for the older students.

> I was thinking about learning more about our language, like, our literacy - Dogrib literacy. In C.T.E.P. I did a little bit on reading and writing but not much. So I'd like to take that. Because in the south there's a lady named Leslie Saxon that is doing that. When I took that with her it was only for three weeks. It wasn't long.

Mary Ann's wish for upgrading in English language and math led her to reflect on how continuing teacher education might be provided in the most helpful way for C.T.E.P.

graduates. She had left residential school early and has felt that her knowledge of the English language and of math has been a problem for her.

> Right now the high school kids they're doing all those different kinds of math with algebra and letters. I don't understand any of that. When I went to school I did add, subtract, divide, multiply. That's all I did. But the kind of math they're doing now, they do in Arctic College, it's really hard for me. I never went that far, eh. But all those simple addition, subtraction, I did that when I was in school. I have some math books at home. I just feel like digging it out and just working on it, eh. And some English book. I really need that. But who's got the time? You're working all day, you come home. You're so tired. English and math and all those different kind of signs for math, I don't understand that and that's where my weak spot is. I want to do that. But not in the evening. No. Last time when we were taking upgrading for a while and working with the students all day, then going upgrading in the evening like seven to nine, it was too much. But during summer holidays about two to three weeks courses that they give, I'm willing to go.
>
> But for math and English I kind of like to do that on my own time. Like I got some math book. I was going to ask them just to help me out with it. Then I can do the studies by myself. My girls too, they're pretty good with math. They're willing to help me. I was doing English 23 by correspondence last year. I did about four modules. But they said we got credits for it when they sent it to Edmonton, but I didn't get a response back. But I heard it cost too much money. [*chuckle*]
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> But for courses, you know, I don't want to go back to school. I don't want to leave my kids behind and it's too hard for me to go back to school. But taking courses for two weeks to three weeks in the summer, during the summer holiday, I wouldn't mind doing that. It can be in Yellowknife, closer to home and maybe in Ft. Smith. But I don't want to go further than that. Too scary! I was in Vermilion for a while. And I had families back home. I went out there by myself and I had families back home and I had to send them money and things like that. It was really hard.

Nora hopes to continue her education to get her Bachelor's Degree. She hopes that courses can be offered that will help the teachers move toward their educational goals.

> I know a lot of us want to continue on in our education. Some of them would like to get their B.Ed., and maybe some would like to go and get their Master's but just seems like we can't leave here and go. Because of family and children, you know, - maybe sick parents. So it would be nice if they would offer courses, off-campus courses if they can find that for us. Anything where people can start building up their credits to at least their first year of University.
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> I know when we had professional (I think she teaches in Victoria University, also I think she teaches in University of Saskatoon) Angela Ward, she came up and did a few sessions with us. Those were good because we did all the ground work and then she let us on our own and told us these are the things that we had to compile and send in, in order to get credit for it. And I think those kind of courses are good.

> I'm a visual person when I learn. I have to see it. So for me, those are more meaningful. But because it's something that I want to do I feel I have to do it on my own time. Maybe a night course. I think correspondence is a little bit too hard. It's too abstract. There's no human contacts except paper and to me that's a hard way of learning.

Rosalie expressed her strong conviction that more teacher development is needed in the area of language arts. She sees a need in the next few years for increased efforts in the area of teacher support to improve the teaching of language. She has a concern that the students at all levels are having difficulty learning to read and write in both the Dogrib and English languages.

> I would like to see the Dogrib staff have language art workshops like the kind we had with Angela Ward; maybe another couple of courses like that with Angela Ward. Because we have a lot of new staff, eh, a lot of new teachers and they'll be needing a lot of support like that. I think they'll be fine with teaching math and science. It's the language arts I'm worried about. Because teaching the language arts is so, so important, and teaching kids how to read and write and also learn how to spell words. Teaching phonics is very, very important. It's crucial. Especially with the primary areas and a lot of new teachers are working in the primary areas, you know. And as a grade one teacher I've known that and I've always tried to fight for that.
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> When kids are in kindergarten for language arts, they're learning a lot of oral stuff, just talking stuff. They need that, and they also need to learn their alphabet, to recognize their alphabet. They also learn the sound of the alphabet. So they need both of them, learning the sound of the alphabet and recognizing the letters. And when they get into grade one the teachers need to focus a lot on the phonics stuff. Because if they don't focus on that, especially in grade one, if they fail phonics stuff , then they're going to struggle with their reading and writing for years to come.
>
> And I've seen a lot of kids like that, even at the E.M.E.S. (Elizabeth MacKenzie Elementary School), a lot of students who did not stay with the class level. And if they fall behind they will be behind for many years. So language arts is something that we really, really need to focus on. Because I see it in the high school. You know, a lot of students if they're sounding out certain letters (like a *B* or *M*) they don't know it and they don't recognize letter *M*. So maybe they'll write a different letter like *W* or something else, you know. And I've seen a lot of that among the senior high. Those kids are struggling with the language arts. So we really need to focus on that.

Initial Support for Beginning Teachers

Anna talked about the need for the classroom assistants assigned to beginning teachers, especially those in multi-grade classrooms, to have more education and more experience. It is important to her that they be able to understand the teacher's plan without having to come to ask questions about it and interrupt her while she is teaching

another group. She feels it would be helpful for classroom assistants to be paid for time after the school day in which to discuss the day's work with the teacher, as well as to assist the teacher with planning and preparation.

In addition she would like to see Divisional Board members coming in to observe in the classrooms of newly graduated C.T.E.P. teachers. She has felt that there are rumours in the community that C.T.E.P. teachers are not well qualified or well educated. She feels that Board members need to be confident that the C.T.E.P. graduates are doing a good job. She expressed a need for C.T.E.P. graduates to feel strongly supported by the board, and felt that the Board had an important role in explaining to the community the value of having their own Dogrib teachers.

Rosalie was strongly committed to the concept of additional support for beginning Dogrib teachers.

> With those new teachers that we have, there's lots of hope in them. And they're still into their learning stage. So they should have as much support as they can. Especially in teaching language arts, because it's not easy learning the language arts part, you know. It's difficult. Especially for us as Native teachers. It was really difficult for me as a teacher to really learn how to teach the language arts properly. After I've been in the field for about five years I've gotten better at it. And last year I think I was really good. Like, I was really confident teaching the language arts. So these new teachers, they will need a lot of support in that area.
>
> The Divisional Board should have some kind of workshops or send them out to conferences as much as they can, until these teachers feel confident and feel good about teaching the language arts. Because some of the old staff have gotten used to the old system so much it's kind of hard to change them. And no matter how many workshops you have for them they got used to that system and it's hard for them to change. So for the new younger teachers we need to have as much workshops as we can. That will be very important for them. So I would tell the Divisional Board to have more programs and workshops [*laughter*] for the young people. I think that really helped me a lot when we had the conference with Angela Ward. That really, really helped me out a lot. And also because I spent a lot of time talking to her.
>
> Also, going out to conferences helps me to see a different view of things from the outside world, you know. You need to see that. I've been to a couple of conferences, the Aboriginal people's conferences. That was really, really good. I've met a lot of really interesting people. When you send people out they'll see that a lot of people are struggling with the same thing that we're struggling with (especially the language part) so it's really good for young people to go out and see that especially the new teachers. So they should send them out to conferences and stuff like that.

> In some areas we're still doing very good. Like, we still have our language. We still have our culture, whereas people from other tribes they are struggling with it a lot. In some of the languages people have lost their language completely. Or some people have lost their traditions and their beliefs (their native religions) so they would go and adopt from other native people. That's something really interesting to me. Because lucky thing we still have a lot of it. We still believe in our native spiritualities and all that. Whereas in other places people have lost all that completely. So it's good for young teachers, new teachers, to go out and learn new things from other people too.
>
> It's really important for them, especially right now, towards the end of the year, first year. I'm sure a lot of new teachers are feeling really frustrated. They're exhausted. Probably feeling a little bit of hopelessness some of them. Especially if they don't get any support at all, you know.

Rosalie emphasized the particular need of teachers in the smaller, isolated settlements for contact with other teachers for the sharing of ideas and for support with problems and frustrations.

> And I really feel sorry for teachers, new teachers that are out in the communities. Especially them. There's a whole bunch of new teachers. I feel sorry for them. Because it's the support. I want to help them out but I'm not able to. Anything that you just get to do, anything that's new to you, it's really frustrating. It helps to share ideas and exchange information.
>
> I think I could be a lot of help for those young teachers - not only in the smaller communities but here as well, you know. I have a lot of really good ideas, especially towards teaching kindergarten, grades one, two, three and four. I have lots of good ideas and I can share information with them, exchange ideas. And if they need help with resources I have lots of resources [*laughter*] that I can share with them, you know. So it would be nice to do that one of these days. Just get together and get all the primary teachers together. And get their long range plans together and share ideas and information with each other on how we can teach our themes and our units well and share our materials. You know, that's what they need a lot of time, the outlying teachers, eh.
>
> A few weeks before school starts, then we can do our long range plans together. So we can share all our information, like the program Jim MacDiarmid put together. If people still want to use that I have nothing against it and I really enjoy teaching it. But as an individual person you have to be very creative. 'Cuz you have to come up with your own things in it, especially in the language arts (concrete materials) and make it into a language art program and be very creative with it. Oh, lot's of ideas coming right now! [*laughter*] because I know all of the long range plans that Jim has. I can just memorize everything that he has. It can be very exciting.

Teacher Orientation

Nora has been aware of the cross-cultural conflicts that can arise between teachers who have come from dramatically different cultural heritages. She described the importance of providing orientation for southern teachers coming into the Dogrib

Division. Although aware of the expense involved in that kind of orientation she feels, nevertheless, that it is extremely important. She spoke of the orientation she had experienced during the original Kw'atindee Bino C.T.E.P.

> One thing that they did at the beginning I thought was just excellent. When they first started the program we all went out - I don't know, we'd call it a retreat I guess, or whatever. And all the people who were involved with the C.T.E.P. program all went out, all the instructors and students and everybody. And they brought us out to Wha Ti on one of the camps they have, one of the fishing camps out there. And we had a ball.
>
> We had meetings all morning, all afternoon, sometimes going into the evening. But there was that bonding there that I think really made a big difference. And trying to bring the community into the classroom and bringing the school out to the community. I think that was one of the best eye openers, I think, for a lot of people. Going out and doing something like that.
>
> It's too bad that something can't be done yearly or every two years. But I'm not just talking for only Dene teachers. I'm talking for all people who teach in Dene communities. I think that's an excellent orientation. Where we all go out on the land and just - we learn about each other and our surroundings and who the people are that we're going to be working with - what kind of people they are. Find out about the students. I think that's so important.
>
> We were saying it's too bad that the Divisional Board couldn't make a policy stating that all new staff had to come in - come in a week early or something. And then they would pull their people together and (we don't even have to go far, you know) and have an orientation. And even bring the other native teachers, or aboriginal teachers together. Go somewhere, spend two or three days together and go back.
>
> I know in the high school, what we tried to do there was ask for a day. We took a day (professional development day) because it's in the fall and they're starting their year plans. So all the teachers would pay so much money for the plane and we'd go out on the caribou hunt and spend three days out there and come back. And I think, in that sense it's made a difference.

School and Community Co-operation

Louisa looked forward to increased learning opportunities for the students and the development of a strong sense of responsibility among the adults in the community. She has hopes that the community and the school can work very closely together in the future.

> One of the things that I would really like to see is that learning is continuous for the kids. That when they leave our school at three forty-five or four o'clock, there's something that the community can offer to them where they can continue on learning things that they would need later on.
>
> And learning responsibility. I think the government has really made our people dependent on them, that they know that they don't have to do a day's work and still get

> money from welfare and that really has bothered me a lot. And I really want the people to be independent and to be able to do things for themself. A lot of them are doing that, but then sometimes, I walk around the community and listen to the children (because the children are our future) and if they're bored and they have nothing to do in the community then we have to look at ourselves.
>
> Because I don't want the school to be isolated from the community. It's got to be a part of the community and it's got to offer things to the people in the community. As well, the children that go into the community have to have something that's happening for them in the community. And so those are the things that we're working on.
>
> And the other thing that I would really like is to help the children and the parents to work out some of the problems that are affecting their learning. Some of the things that some parents are trying (and we have rules that they are doing in parenting programs) maybe four or five years from now we'll see the results. And there's so much more that we need to share. And if we want the parents to really be able to be a real partner in the education of their children then they need to know what is it that we do in school. It's so important for me to have a parent really understand what I'm talking about and to share ideas with me on what sorts of things that I need to improve on and how they can help me.

Dreams and Aspirations for the Future

In thinking about the future the teachers expressed some of their desires and hopes for themselves as teachers and for the future of the communities and the Dogrib people. Many of them expressed the desire to continue their teacher education at a University, so that they could complete their Bachelor of Education or Master of Education degree.

For all the teachers the preservation of the Dogrib cultural identity was a first priority. Lena's father had been taught to read syllabics and used them throughout his life to read the hymns which were sung in church. Lena expressed the wish that the knowledge of the syllabics would be retained as part of the Dogrib cultural heritage.

> I have no idea where my father learned that because he hadn't really told me where he learned that from. I would really like to learn that too because a lot of people here they were saying that we should teach our kids in syllabics. Because after the one that knows dies there won't be any around, like. But what we're doing right now is just doing English. It's not in syllabics but in the alphabet. So I told them that if you want us to learn the syllabics you should teach us, like in the class. Then if we know how we'll teach that to the children.

Lena also spoke of her hopes for the future for the young people in her community and of the need for more young men becoming teachers in the Dogrib schools.

> Well, I'm just going to keep on teaching in our community and help the others who need help. I'm hoping that the students will continue keeping their language. And also they need to be taught two-way cultures, like the white ways and our culture. Our culture is important too. But they also need to go to school and get their education. I hope that if once they finish their school they will go into some courses. I'm hoping that there would be jobs in the community. But there's hardly much. There's hardly any jobs around here but if not they'll probably go other places to get a job. There should be some courses going for the students that graduate. I mean like, after they graduate they'll be going on to some training and probably they'll get some jobs here in their home town too.
>
> I talked to the students. I told them that there should be some more Dogrib teachers in our community. I also told them how it is and they should think about it. Not only a woman could be in C.T.E.P. Men could be in there too. And I encouraged them to really think about it and that it's really serious. I am not the only one that needs to be teaching but also the others. They need to do that too, you know.

Anna described her enjoyment of teaching young children and her desire to continue her own education to increase her knowledge and understanding of children's learning. She spoke about her enjoyment of her work and of being with the children. Sometimes, she explained, she comes in to the school on Saturday to prepare for teaching so that she doesn't have to rush around too much through the week. She hopes to continue to teach for a couple of years and then she is thinking of attending the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon or the University of Alberta in Edmonton to get her Bachelor of Education.

She talked about her dreams for the school and the communities. She hopes the time will come when they will have mostly Dogrib teachers in the community schools. She would like to see all the young Dogrib people go back to school and learn more so that the communities can run things themselves, and no longer be dependent on so much assistance from the south. For herself she hopes that all her students will be able to read and write up to their ability level by the end of the school year. She would like to continue to teach at the primary level. After she finishes her education she would like to come back and continue to teach. She said that the best part of teaching for her is to see the kids learning and to see them smile as they enter and when they leave. That is what makes her happy.

Maintaining Hope

Frustration, Fatigue and Fear

The maintenance of hope and strong motivation is something that will need to be paid attention to in order to retain the Dogrib teachers in the school system. Some teachers with many years of service in the division spoke of the increasing number of children with problems that they were observing in their classes. They remarked that teaching has become more difficult today than it was in the early days of their teaching careers and they spoke of frustration and extreme tiredness. Rosalie, a certified teacher since graduating in 1992, has high motivation and enthusiasm for teaching. But even for her, there are days when it's difficult to maintain hope for the future.

> When I was working with primary it was a lot of struggle for me as an individual person. Because a lot of time students are coming to school with a whole lot of problems and as teacher I try to help them out and also spend a lot of time talking to parents. But many, many times I felt like I wasn't going anywhere at all. Like, I'm not helping anybody. And when I felt like I wasn't helping anybody, I felt really out of control and I got really scared with it.
>
> I wasn't scared about being out of control. I was scared of the kind of future we're going to have, just looking at the kind of students that were coming in at primary age. And I got really, really scared. Because I know that a lot of these parents who are in to the addictions, the drinking, abuse, all that's going on with the drinking and drugs and gambling, you know, that I just felt like it's useless. It's hopeless. So last year, by the end of the year I just couldn't deal with it anymore. The kind of things that students were coming to school with was just unbelievable, was just unbelievable.
>
> So I had to really, really think about what I was doing here. Am I being a help at all, you know, to my people? Am I helping anybody? And I just felt so hopeless. But when I found out that this job was open I applied for it, and I thought this is where I can help as much as I can. I can, you know, give them a little bit of hope, and hopefully they will change. And hopefully these young people, once they become a parent they will be a good parent. And that they would have a better self-control of their lives and create a better life for themself and for their future kids, you know. And so every day I keep hoping that I am helping someone. I think I am. I think I am a lot. Students are now coming to me and they talk about the kind of problems they're having, things they're disturbed with and all that. And it's been really, really good. And they ask lots of questions. And that's a good sign.
>
> Right now I feel like I'm - yesterday I'm down and today I just feel like, oh this is just hopeless. Sometimes I get that feeling, like hopelessness feeling. Because I've been dealing with so many crises, so many things that's going on with adults. And like right now, you know, one of them (one of my clients) is a young girl. She was drunk. And there's a whole bunch of talk about when she got drunk. And there's this other student that I really like too. He got arrested for break and entering and stealing stuff.

> And then I have a couple other students who are in trouble too. So, it's kind of hopeless some times.

But characteristically, Rosalie concluded on a positive note.

> But still, there's always hope. [*laughter*] I was feeling really hopeless last night but today I feel better.

Maintaining Hope Through Attendance at Conferences

Because of it's commitment to the preservation of the language, the Dogrib Division organized a Language Centre for the production of materials for students written in the Dogrib language. After teaching in the classroom for a while Louisa was asked to co-ordinate the Language Centre. She spoke of that experience and stressed the value of going to conferences for maintaining teacher morale. At such conferences other aboriginal educators share their similar experiences and the progress they have been able to make. Those are some of the experiences that have encouraged her to maintain her hope in the possibility of improving the situation for the Dogrib people.

> Then I went into a Language Centre position. And that, I think is also another turning point for me because I got to go to a lot of conferences. And especially when you go to conferences with other Native cultures in the States (and I went to New Zealand) I think it's just the exposure and seeing what other people are doing that really has helped me a lot. Because, if these other people in different places can achieve these things for their people, then we can do the same thing here.

Louisa ended by explaining the importance of sharing the knowledge and insights gained through attendance at important conferences. She related her thoughts to the traditional teachings of the elders about *sharing* and *balance*.

> And a lot of it is just basically passing on your knowledge of what you've learned and sharing with the others. It's the same thing that our elders have always been saying. Like, they share their stories. They share their things with us. And as young people, whatever we learn we should be sharing it with them so that the knowledge is always balanced.

Tying Together the Narrative Threads

The Concerns

For the Dogrib teachers, who encounter difficult problems on a daily basis, teaching brings an acute awareness of their communities' situation. They fear for the retention of their language and culture; for the future well-being of their students; for the emotional well-being of their community members; for the land itself with the growing possibility of pollution and environmental destruction; and for their freedom to continue to harvest much of their food and medicine from the land. Mary Ann envisioned a time when life for the northern Dene people might be like living on a Reserve, when the people could no longer hunt or trap freely or set their nets on the lakes.

Preservation of the Dogrib language and of a "strong cultural identity" for Dogrib people are the principal concerns expressed by the Dogrib teachers. The two are considered to be interdependent and inseparable, two sides of the same coin. Loss of the language would inevitably mean the loss of cultural concepts which are embedded in the language. It would result in a grave reduction in the cultural richness and uniqueness of the Dogrib people (and similarly, other Dene people). It would deprive society in general of the wealth of environmental knowledge and expertise of older community members with regard to survival in a harsh environment and the subtle elements of living in harmony with the natural environment.

> [Language] doesn't just mean being able to speak. It's knowing who I am that makes me that much more powerful, because language does that to you. It enables you to have power. The ability to communicate with both worlds is power; the ability to speak to history is power.
>
> So it gives me a backbone, like something inside of me that makes me very secure with me. And you only feel that backbone because you know where you come from, who you are . . . It's the core of being a person, of being a Dene.
>
> So when you're talking about languages, you're talking about a whole structure of things, but you're talking about how I know who I am. That's what the stem of this language is. Language isn't just "out there". It is out there, but it's coming from somewhere, coming from within. It's the way you put yourself out there, out there in the

> world (Dene speaker, cited in The Report of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages, 1986, p. 17).

Dogrib students today are surrounded by the language, artifacts and ideas of a dominant, powerful and privileged southern culture. As Louisa explained, much of what they see and experience daily within their own culture does not reflect the true value and worth of their cultural heritage. In addition, they still frequently encounter racial prejudice and negative attitudes towards their culture. And because they no longer spend much time out on the land, they have difficulty understanding the cultural concepts that are being taught to them. The result is a severe loss of cultural identity and a confusion about what their role in life should be. The teachers attribute the community breakdown they are witnessing to the loss of cultural identity, which expresses itself in gambling, drug and alcohol abuse, anger and violence, conflict between generations and so on.

Retention of cultural identity does not mean living entirely as they did in the past. Louisa explains that it means maintaining a sense of "pride" in their cultural heritage and recognizing that they have a unique and valuable contribution to make within modern society. The culture is not static and students can be encouraged to extend and adapt the culture in new ways so that it remains a vital, living culture. Preservation of the cultural heritage is described as preserving the history, the spiritual foundation of the culture and the essential values inherent in the traditional culture; values of respect, patience, closeness to the land and the community, sharing and caring, maintenance of balance, and so on. The teachers strive to teach the cultural heritage in ways that make it relevant for the students living in today's world.

The severe decline in Dogrib language fluency, seen among the younger students entering school, results in a complex educational situation. Some children now enter school speaking primarily English, as their first language. Others enter school speaking primarily Dogrib, and yet another group enters school speaking a mixture of English and Dogrib with no strong first language. This means that schools must provide alternative programs for the various groups if their language and learning needs are to be adequately

met. Compounding the problem of preservation of the Dogrib language is the fact that Dogrib speaking teachers are still a minority within the school system.

Possible Solutions

The retention of the Dogrib language can only be achieved through strong home and community support. There is a perception among the Dogrib teachers that, at the present time, the community members are not fully aware of the need for speaking Dogrib in the home and community. Some parents now favour English over Dogrib because of its usefulness for securing a job in the wage economy. The teachers see a need for strong support from the divisional board and other leaders for promoting community awareness of the need for passing on the language and culture to the younger generation. They expressed a desire for the school system to move out into the community to encourage use of the Dogrib language, through increased emphasis on parent orientations, workshops, parenting-skills classes and any other avenues that can be explored. It was suggested that the school division provide a qualified Dogrib instructor to serve as a co-ordinator and to be a strong influence for cultural activities in the school and community.

Dogrib immersion classes are seen as one possibility for promoting retention of the language for those children who are coming to school with English as a first language and possibly for those children who enter school with a mixture of languages. In order for such a program to be successful, strong parental and community support would have to be secured before initiating the program. It was suggested that, in the absence of Dogrib immersion programs, the bi-lingual programs need to be strengthened.

Lena mentioned the wishes expressed by some of the elders for the retention of the syllabic system of writing. I believe a strong case can be made for developing Dogrib immersion classes for beginning students and introducing them to literacy through the syllabic system. The introduction of the English alphabetic system would be postponed until later grades. The program would depend for its success on support by the elders who

are knowledgeable in syllabic reading. Close contact between those elders and the beginning students would be essential. Such a program would honour the wishes expressed by the elders for retention of the syllabic system. But its benefits could potentially go far beyond that. It would increase the opportunities for contact and valuable communication between the elders and the young children, thus overcoming some of the present gap between the generations. Stronger bonds would be promoted between the children and their elders which might have healthy emotional benefits for both groups. It would facilitate the transmission of the highest level of Dogrib language from the elders to the children and thereby contribute to retention of their cultural heritage.

In terms of literacy development, it is possible that introduction to literacy through syllabics might be a more effective way of introducing literacy to the Dogrib children. While that hypothesis needs to be tested through research, Rosalie's story of learning to read syllabics at home, before entering school, suggests that it might be so. Syllabics are a familiar and valued part of Dogrib heritage. Unlike the English alphabet, they are a form of literacy already present (and in frequent use) in most homes where elders reside. It is well established in literacy research that home support is an important factor in promoting beginning students' literacy development. Rosalie succeeded in becoming literate in syllabics under her father's instruction. In addition, history has shown dramatically how rapidly the Cree people were able to learn the syllabic system. "Evans' Cree alphabet was robust and effective. In a few lessons, the majority of the Cree to whom he introduced it, written in soot and oil on birch-bark, which the Cree called 'the magic of the talking birch-bark', had mastered it, and could read in their own language" (Mason, 1996).

A need was expressed for increasing the amount of print resources for teaching reading and writing of Dogrib. Although much material has been produced for the younger students, there is seen to be a need for more resources for older students. In general, Rita and others expressed a need for increased emphasis on funding, personnel and resources

for cultural activities and language development. Modelling the use of the Dogrib language by conducting workshops and presentations in Dogrib was recommended.

Community Development

Louisa made a strong plea for closer community and school co-operation. Resources need to be provided for students and parents to assist them in the necessary healing process in the midst of community social instability. In addition, communication with parents about the nature of modern education is important if parents are to be full partners with schools in their children's education. She also saw a need for after-school activities which would reinforce the learnings the students were being introduced to in school. She asked for recreation and relaxation facilities for the adults to assist them in adjusting to the change from a nomadic lifestyle to a community based lifestyle. In her words, "When I look at our people it's just like they're here but they're ready to just leave to go back out in the bush and do what they're supposed to do." New activities need to be created for the people if the community is going to be the centre of their lives, activities which allow for the development of their creative talents. A community development plan is required which provides for playground and park areas and other facilities for recreation.

In 1998 the Dogrib communities took a bold step in the effort to improve the situation for the Dogrib people. Three of the major bodies involved in education and social development, the divisional boards of education, health and social services amalgamated into a single body, the Dogrib Community Services Board. It is hoped that this format will allow the Dogrib people to take an integrated and holistic approach to solving the problems of their communities.

Teacher In-Service Support and Professional Development

Many of the teachers wish to continue their teacher education to receive their Bachelor of Education or Master of Education degrees from accredited universities. It is now possible for them to receive another year of education towards their education degree within the Northwest Territories, from Arctic College in Yellowknife or Ft. Smith. In addition, the teachers encourage the Dogrib Community Services Board to continue the past policy of bringing intensive, short term, university courses to Rae-Edzo to allow them to build credits toward their university degrees.

Other teachers expressed the need for continued up-grading in subjects such as Math, English language and Dogrib literacy. Summer courses of two or three weeks are recommended for such courses. Home study is mentioned as a possibility, which could be provided through correspondence courses or distance learning.

Anna expressed the need for well-trained classroom assistants, suggesting that classroom assistants' hours of work be lengthened to provide for joint planning and evaluation for the teacher and the assistant, working together. A need was expressed for single-grade rather than multi-grade classes, where possible, in the first year of teaching.

Visits by members of the divisional board were requested for new C.T.E.P. graduates and public acknowledgement of the strengths of C.T.E.P. graduates by divisional board members. There is a feeling that C.T.E.P. graduates are not always seen by the community (and perhaps by other teachers with bachelor or master of education degrees) as fully qualified teachers.

Strong support for beginning teachers was recommended, especially for those teaching in the small, isolated communities, to maintain motivation, energy and enthusiasm. Rosalie described the exhaustion and hopelessness that beginning teachers experience towards the end of the first years of teaching in such difficult circumstances. Contacts with other Aboriginal groups allow teachers to compare their situations with those of others and learn about successful programs. Outside workshops and conferences

were mentioned as a means of maintaining hope and perspective for teachers, especially towards the end of the teaching year.

Provisions for gathering divisional teachers together, especially those from isolated communities, were recommended so that all of the teachers could benefit from the discussion of mutual problems and the exchange of information. Long range planning together, mutual support and encouragement, and the sharing of resources, ideas and information were suggested.

Orientation programs for new staff were seen as being valuable in developing bonding and cohesiveness among teachers. In particular, orientation to the culture and it's land based values were suggested for non-Dogrib teachers to increase cross-cultural understanding.

A prevailing concern was the need for improved language skills among the students. Major efforts in providing strong professional development in the teaching of the language arts were called for.

VIII. Response to the Teachers' Stories

Recent Forms of Inservice Support for Teachers

Using a metaphor of teaching as a "never-ending journey", Clive Carre affirms the need for continuing professional development and support for all teachers, particularly in their first years of teaching, adding that "what we know about the process of beginning to teach is limited" (Carre, 1993, p.191). Peterson (1990) identifies two major reasons for providing support and professional development for teachers: the retention of promising teachers and the development of more effective teachers. Both of those goals are significant in the Northwest Territories. A number of Aboriginal teachers have left teaching to take other responsible positions in the Territory and those who remain express their own needs for further teaching knowledge.

The expense of providing support and professional development for teachers is justified economically, Peterson claims, because it offsets replacement costs for teachers who might otherwise leave the system and counterbalances the hidden costs of poorer quality teaching. Teachers almost always experience gaps in their training and unanticipated challenges in their daily teaching roles. (Darling-Hammond & Millman, 1990). Teaching is a life-long journey of growth and learning. The need for inservice support and professional development is always present.

However, the most significant need for inservice support for Dogrib teachers can be found within the teachers' stories of their teaching experiences. They have shown the extreme difficulty of teaching in communities which have suffered social breakdown as a result of colonization. The high stress level of teaching in such a difficult situation requires a special sensitivity in terms of teacher support. There is a need to find ways to maintain the *hope* that teaching can truly make a difference.

At the same time, the strengths of the teachers also need to be celebrated. Woods notes the high degree of spontaneous teacher development that occurs in schools (1989, p.2). "Teachers grow into new jobs and new roles, adapt to new situations, refine their

techniques, increase their strengths and shore up their weaknesses, profit from their relationships with each other and their pupils." Bearing this in mind, Woods suggests that models of inservice development which are imposed from above, and which do not make the teachers' own perceived needs central to the development program are not likely to succeed. Inservice support and development, therefore, must be teacher centered.

Historical Approaches: A Systems Management Model

How should teachers within our schools be helped to grow and improve in their professional abilities? Within our Euro-Canadian culture, as elsewhere, we attempt to answer such questions through a process of research. However, educational research is a beginner in the arena of scientific research. Like an adolescent child, the field of educational research has struggled to define itself, to figure out what it is and what it should become.

In the past, major decisions about teachers and teaching have been based on a *technical-rational* model of education. Teaching was seen as a process of implementing effective strategies and techniques. *Systems management* approaches to curriculum development and *competency-based* approaches to teacher education were common (Woods, 1989). The competency-based teacher education and system management approaches to education are clearly seen in some of the writings of the nineteen seventies and early nineteen eighties. Much of the research attempted to identify the characteristics of a good, or competent, teacher. Questions arose as to how to evaluate teachers' competency. Some principals of schools and other administrators became caught in the conflicting roles of providing support for teachers and the need to evaluate their competency. Within the area of professional development and inservice support for teachers, courses were developed which attempted to increase levels of teacher competency.

However, professional development for practising teachers was frequently seen to be "missing the mark". Courses and workshops offered outside the school, to a wide variety of teachers at once, frequently did not match the individual needs of practising teachers. Discussing the ineffectiveness of courses which were offered to provide inservice development for teachers, Woods states, ". . . this, it might be argued, has been because they have been ministering to a technocratic rationality model of teacher knowledge and learning (1989, p.9)."

Recent Approaches: Teacher Self-Evaluation

As awareness of the inadequacy of the support being provided for practising teachers began to develop, the idea of teacher *evaluation* gradually began to be transformed into one of teacher *self-evaluation*. A shift in thinking had begun to occur (Creswell, 1994, p.4). Zeichner writes, "In the last decade, the slogans *reflective teaching, reflective practitioner, action research, teachers-as-researchers,* and a host of related terms have become fashionable throughout all segments of the teacher education community. These terms have become slogans around which teacher educators all over the world have rallied in the name of education reform" (1994, p.15).

Schon (1983, 1987) popularized a notion of *'knowledge-in-action'* and *'reflection-in-action'* with regards to teacher professional development. Those notions of self-reflectivity have now become widespread in any discussion of educational change. Narrative in a variety of forms became an important element of reflective inquiry. The power of narrative, as exemplified in literature and history, became a new perspective and a new tool for social science and education researchers to use in developing knowledge of human interactions (Polkinghorne, 1988). The stories told by teachers themselves were becoming an important way of gaining new understanding about processes of teaching. Most importantly, through story-telling, teachers were beginning to take centre-stage in their own professional development. Their prior knowledge of life and learning were

becoming recognized as important elements of their teaching, described by Clandinin and Connelly as teachers' *personal-practical knowledge* (1985).

The new understandings of teacher professional development which have been emerging often call for a collaborative relationship between teachers and academic researchers in a variety of forms of action-research. Through this process of collaboration, educational research and teacher inservice support and professional development are becoming inextricably intertwined. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) describe the goals of such collaborative research: fostering a spirit of confidence in teachers regarding the personal ways they know their classrooms; affirming a central voice for teachers in curriculum and instruction; enhancing the teachers' sense of authority within educational structures which promote prescriptive administrative policies and practices (pp.269-282).

Teachers are being empowered to take responsibility for their own growth as teachers and for what happens within their classrooms. However, such responsibility requires knowledge and self-understanding. "To claim authority and assume responsibility one must be fully aware of the consequences of one's thoughts, feelings and actions (Tappan & Brown,1989, p.192, cited in Olson, p.25)." Provision of time for self-reflection and opportunities and structures for coming together for dialogue with other teachers must be provided.

The emphasis on teachers' own experiences within their classrooms promotes a different relationship between theory and practice. Rather than beginning with theory the teachers' learning begins in practice. This practical starting point gives them a grounded way to make sense of the theories and models which make up professional knowledge in education. "Both the experiential knowledge and the practical starting point provide a context in which [teachers] can plan, experiment, reflect and read in order to develop their teaching knowledge. (Clandinin and Hogan, 1988, p.2, cited in Clandinin at al. 1993, p.6)

This form of professional development is in keeping with the format of the first Kw'atindee Bino Community Teacher Education Program which was carried out in Rae-Edzo from 1990 to 1992. The program, recognized by the United Nations, was an innovative one which united theory and practice. It is described in the Program Outline as follows:

> In September of 1990 the Canadian Commission for Unesco recognized the project as an official activity of the World Decade for Cultural Development. The program is an alternative model of teacher education that is designed to facilitate the teacher training of para-professionals who presently work in northern schools in program support positions as well as other individuals who are interested in becoming teachers but are unable to leave their home community. As such, it is a field-based program that will give participants the opportunity to remain at home with their families and earn a living. . . . The Community Teacher Education Program is intended to be as much a process as a program where participants will cooperatively explore and identify the knowledge, skills and methods that are suitable in educating the children of their community (Martin, Kw'atindee Bino Community Teacher Education Program Outline, 1990-1992, p. 1).

Self-reflective practices for the professional development of teachers are described in educational writings in a host of different forms: action research; collaborative research between practising teachers and university professors; narrative research; teacher initiated classroom research; mentor relationships between teachers; dialogue within groups of teachers based on the sharing of oral or written stories; cross-classroom visiting; pairing of teachers for the sharing of dialogue journals; reading and discussion groups; and so on. This is a time of intellectual ferment and creativity in the area of educational research and teacher professional development. Following Carre's metaphor of teaching as a journey, a teacher in a multi-cultural classroom captured the current excitement in these words, ". . . there is an exhilarating feeling of fresh new possibilities; of opening cultural doors and of seeing through new windows. We are all pioneers, travelling in uncharted territory" (Feuervergar, 1993, p.104).

Developing a Program for Professional Development

The choice of a form for the promotion of teacher self-evaluation and professional development must be a creative process. Woods reminds us that "Individual teachers and administrators within schools represent a reservoir of untapped enterprise in respect of their own professional development (Smyth, 1982, p.333, cited in Woods,1989, p.2)." Within this study the Dogrib teachers themselves have eloquently described their hopes for their students and for themselves and have indicated the directions they wish to follow. Their words provide the starting point of the creative process for designing helpful programs for inservice support.

One of the areas of concern frequently mentioned by the teachers is the teaching of language. It is obvious that much inservice development is needed in the area of language development in both English and Dogrib. The teachers have indicated deep concern about the decline of the younger Dogrib students' abilities to use their Dogrib language. There is grave danger that the language could be lost as a living language. The teachers have also indicated that the students' levels of speaking, reading and writing of the English language are weak. This is a fertile area for the encouragement of some form of teacher, classroom-centred action research.

Such research could take any of the forms mentioned above. With support and encouragement from administrators, projects could be planned and carried out by individual teachers within their own classrooms, by groups of teachers working on a shared project, by mentor teachers working with beginning teachers, or by teachers working collaboratively with university language educators.

A booklet, designed to encourage and assist in self-reflection and personal professional growth among teachers, *Keeping Spirits High: Renewing Our Commitment To Education,* was produced by the American Association of School Administrators in 1993. Within the booklet a school district is described which has made professional development a "cornerstone of its efforts to attract and retain excellent staff members"

(p.22). In that district a group of teachers "decided they wanted to improve the way they taught reading in their building". The benefits of the teachers' involvement are described.

> They (the teachers) asked for help in identifying places to visit and experts to contact. They set up their own visitations to other schools. They brought in practitioners from across the state to visit their school. They ended up implementing a new reading program in the building. These teachers are energized. And their energy has spilled over to affect their students! (p.22)

Continuing the Conversations

Within this study the teachers have revealed something of what teaching and learning has been like for them. With clarity, commitment and conviction they have presented their own understanding of their needs and of their hopes and desires for the future of their students, for themselves as teachers and for their communities. Their collective understanding is grounded in their own childhood experiences of growing up and learning within their home communities; within the culture, language and landscape of the Dogrib people.

But the stories, as they are recorded here, are not the final word. Life is never static. Many important questions arise out of the teachers' stories. Foley (1997) points out some of the areas of difficulty in cross-cultural education through a description of the work of Scollon and Scollon (1981) among other Athabaskan people of northern Canada.

> Scollon and Scollon argue that learning the mainstream literacy practices of the school involves learning values and social practices and ways of knowing that conflict with local Athabaskan norms. For Athabaskan people in subordinate positions, such as students, do not show off or engage in self displays either verbally or non-verbally; rather they observe the person in a superior position in order to learn. This is in marked contrast to white middle-class Canadian or American children who are expected to demonstrate their abilities, especially verbal abilities. Correlated with Athabaskan lack of self-display is a reticence to boast, predict the future, or gloat over another's misfortune. . . . Essayist prose puts Athabaskan children in an impossible situation. The production of an essay requires the child to engage in a major act of self-display, to persuade the reader, typically the superior teacher, of her, the inferior child's, point of view, no less! . . . Further, the normative audience of any essay is an idealized reader about whom the child knows nothing. In the everyday world of the Athabaskan child, this is a situation which calls for silence, not verbal self-display. What counts as good use of language for Athabaskans, i.e.. discourse about information already known to the participants without any use of rhetorical devices of persuasion (which would violate

> norms against self-display), is in fact bad essayist prose by the standards of the school system (431 - 432).

It is not clear whether the ideas of Scollon and Scollon are applicable to the Dogrib communities, or whether work done in 1981 is still valid in 1999. But the ideas provide "food for thought" about the compatibility of the ways of teaching and learning between mainstream culture and Dene culture.

The people of the Dogrib communities are committed to becoming "strong like two people": to preserving their language and their cultural identity while helping their young people gain the skills which are required for survival in the new scientific and technological environment in which they are immersed. But caution is required. It is necessary to consider how to help Dogrib students gain the strengths of the new culture without also inheriting some of its weaknesses and failures. How can young Dogrib people learn the necessary skills without absorbing new cultural values which often contradict Dene values? The poem, *I Lost My Talk*, written by Rita Joe (1993) of the Micmac Nation expresses the dilemma.

> . . . .
> I speak like you
> I think like you
> I create like you
> The scrambled ballad, about my word.
>
> Two ways I talk
> Both ways I say,
> Your way is more powerful.
>
> So gently I offer my hand and ask,
> Let me find my talk
> So I can teach you about me.

The scientific emphasis of mainstream culture can be perceived, in some degree, as being in opposition to traditional Dogrib values. Muller (1986) describes the role of science in our global culture today.

> More scientific progress has been achieved in the last thirty years than during the entire previous history of mankind. Instruments, linked by instant communication to our planet, have been sent farther and farther away into the universe. Humans have set foot on the moon and have returned safely to earth. Outer space is being used for unprecedented systems of world-wide communication and study of the earth's resources

> and physical conditions. . . . We have witnessed the harnessing of atomic energy, the birth of electronics, of cybernetics, of laser technology and the unlocking of many mysteries of the infinitely small. Microbiology has opened up new exhilarating and frightening vistas of scientific advance with the synthesis of genes. Never on this planet has there been such intensive research and discovery by so many scientists in so many lands (p.38).

Muller celebrates the growth of scientific knowledge but he also points out its darker side. "Everywhere, leaders of nations consider the environment to be one of the most important problems of our planet (p.39)."

Brown (1976) also describes some of the problems associated with the expansion of scientific technology and compares the present, rapid, environmental destruction and social disharmony with the centuries of environmental and social stability found among pre-Columbian Aboriginal peoples.

> When I was a young man before and up through the Eisenhower Administration in the United States in the 1950's, . . . most people saw stretching before us a long time of growth in spectacular scientific discoveries, new gadgets, new cars, more freeways, space flights, and on and on. But today both older and younger generations are becoming increasingly aware that our civilization and its doctrine of striving for material worth and comfort are failing to meet or answer the really deep and lasting needs of mankind and that we are hurtling forward with our increasing pollution, population explosions, crime, wars, riots and other signs of disharmony to a meeting place with destiny that could be extremely uncomfortable if not completely disastrous for us all.

> The Native Americans are the people of Earth and Sky. For untold generations they have been dwelling on these two great continents of the western hemisphere largely in harmony with their environment and with far less conflict and disharmony between nations than has been prevalent in the eastern hemisphere. . . . They expressed a reverence for and understanding of all life that was outstanding and that we would be very wise to respect. (pp. 11-12)

The social and environmental problems of our time raise serious questions for educators. What form of education is needed for healing our environment and developing a more humane society? These are the dilemmas which people everywhere are beginning to recognize. Thus, the teachers' conversations must continue. Indeed, they must deepen and intensify. Choices between opposing ways of thinking must be made. Funding priorities within the Division must be set. Teaching priorities must be set within each teacher's classroom and programming decisions must be made.

Developing a public education system in the Northwest Territories has largely been accomplished by importing the structures of education from southern Canada. In the process of becoming certified teachers the northern aboriginal people have primarily been exposed to the thinking and the ways of teaching of North American educators. The methods they have learned are those that have evolved within the mainstream North American educational system. It might be worthwhile to explore alternate methods of teaching used in other cultures which have comparable cultures to the Dene cultures.

An example of such alternate methods can be found in The People's Republic of China. Dr. Richard Anderson, director of educational research at the Centre for the Study of Reading at the University of Illinois, led a recent delegation of American and Canadian teachers to China to study the teaching of reading there. He describes the Chinese educational methods as "amazingly different" from North American teaching methods (personal communication, Oct., 1998). Although the Chinese culture differs in many ways from that of the Dogrib people, there are some areas where similar values exist. There is a high level of respect for the knowledge and expertise of elders within the Chinese culture, similar to that found within the Dogrib culture. In addition, there is a concern for "saving face" and maintaining strong community relationships within Chinese culture which is also reminiscent of the Dogrib culture. That community orientation results in a diminished emphasis on the strong individualism which is promoted within North American classrooms. Thus, choral responding by students is seen in Chinese classrooms to a far greater degree than individual responding. There is much less opportunity for individual mistakes which cause students to be embarrassed.

During the research process for this study (knowing at first hand the difficulty of teaching reading to the Dogrib students) I inquired of a school division administrator whether any of the Dogrib teachers had achieved strong success in teaching reading. One teacher in particular was mentioned; a teacher who did not participate actively in the study. However, on several occasions I was able to observe that the teacher used a strong

element of choral responding within her language lessons. That has led me to believe that contact and educational exchanges between Dogrib teachers and Chinese teachers might be fruitful.

Specific Recommendations

Throughout the study many problems and concerns have been presented along with suggestions for possible solutions. In concluding this chapter's response to the Dogrib teachers' concerns, some specific recommendations are highlighted here.

The major recommendation is that professional development within the Division should primarily be teacher and classroom centred and practice oriented. All theory should be related to the teachers' daily experiences within their classrooms. All of the Division's teachers should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own growth as teachers, and to be directly involved in the planning of their own professional development: to plan, experiment, reflect, read and to dialogue with other teachers. To facilitate this, it is necessary to create a variety of opportunities and structures to allow teachers to come together for mutual support and dialogue. Exchange visits to countries such as China, or other countries which share some of the cultural values of the Dogrib people, would greatly expand the teachers' understanding of possible methods and approaches to be used in education, beyond those used in the United States and Canada.

Language Arts should receive major attention within the Division's Strategic Plan. Language arts teachers should be encouraged to develop classroom-based action research projects in collaboration with university language instructors and researchers.

In response to the decline in the use of the Dogrib language, it is recommended that the Dogrib Division consider the implementation of a pilot project to test the effectiveness of Dogrib immersion classes for beginning students. The use of syllabics, as outlined above, could be an important component of the pilot project.

Metaphors of Teaching

Caretakers of the Social Fabric

Daily language is saturated with metaphors. They allow us to communicate about complex, abstract systems in imagistic ways. While no single metaphor can encompass all the complexities of an educational process, metaphors can be useful in clarifying the values and attitudes which underlie different approaches to education. As the study draws to a close, the following metaphors are offered as a summary of some of the fundamental understandings of the study.

The Dogrib teachers work together to preserve, mend and display the woven tapestry of their community's cultural life. They stitch together the areas that have been torn apart; mend and strengthen areas that are becoming thin and worn; and encourage their students to weave in new motifs using the cultural themes of their past. Together they stand guard over the ancient tapestry hoping to preserve it from the ravages of the winds of change that have assailed it.

Their necessary role as primary caretakers of the cultural heritage gives them, I think, a somewhat different orientation to teaching than that of many of the teachers from southern Canada who work beside them. It is likely that the southern teachers are more oriented towards providing the technological information and skills which are necessary for economic survival in a global technological society. Perhaps that is the way it should be. Both aspects of education are needed, and together the southern and northern teachers create a productive partnership.

Teaching as Healing: Teaching as Storytelling

Within the Dogrib teachers' stories two other powerful metaphors of teaching can be seen: the teacher as *healer* and the teacher as *story-teller*. The need for healing is evident in the stories the teachers have told about their teaching experiences. In describing a metaphor of teaching as healing, Katz and St. Denis (1991) write,

> Within the formal school setting, the 'teacher as healer' is one who, informed by spiritual understanding, seeks to respect, and foster interconnections - between herself, her students, and the subject matter; between the school, the community and the universe at large - while respecting each part of these interconnected webs (p.24).

The Dogrib teachers have mentioned their own telling of traditional stories as a way of helping their students heal, by strengthening their cultural identity. These two understandings of teaching complement each other. Profeit-LeBlanc (1993) writes about their interconnection.

> Now she understood what her grandmother had been saying so many years ago. We would have to look to every source of our culture, our ways to help the people during this time of healing. The stories would have to be remembered, and have to be shared again, particularly the stories of transformation and facing horrendous tests. These unimaginable feats would serve as a role model for this generation and the people would receive guidance and encouragement from the Ancestors who had gone on to the next world.
>
> These life lessons would be too numerous to name but what is more important is that our children of today can be reassured that their future too, is great, and we have to bring our ancient knowledge to light and use it in our own lives, and share it with the rest of the world. Through this process there will be a realization that the most important hero to each one of us is the child within each of us: the child who throughout his or her own life is constantly like Raven trying to bring light to the world. Our responsibility as parents and educators is to ensure that each child becomes their true selves by attaining their full potential as human beings. In so doing, we will give birth to a far greater and nobler civilization than ever before (p. xxvi).

It is my hope that this study will contribute to the process of education within the Dogrib communities, so that the children may be helped to become "their true selves by attaining their full potential as human beings."

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